Satan rehabilitated? A study into satanism in the nineteenth century

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SATAN REHABILITATED?
A Study into Satanism during the Nineteenth Century

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Introduction

When one day, as I walked through the university library, my eye fell on a pulp paperback entitled *The World's Weirdest Cults*, I immediately surmised that Satanism would be among the religions featured in the book. Indeed, seven of the sixteen chapters in the little book turned out to be centered on Satanist 'cults' of one kind or another.[1] It did not take some eerie premonition to make this prediction. Authors of pulp paperbacks are by no means exceptional in ranging Satanism among 'the world's weirdest cults'. The word Satanism conjures images of the bizarre, the sinister, and the maleficious. To this day, it remains very much a subject enshrouded in mystery and rumour, associated with the monstrous and the perverse, and, ultimately, the practice of evil. This attitude is reflected in most of the literature, both academic and non-academic, that deals with the subject or happens to refer to it in passing; it was also reflected in the reactions of many people, both academic and non-academic, to whom I told which subject I was working on.

Such associations naturally make Satanism an excellent tool to blacken other people. Throughout history, persons and groups alleged to practise Satanism of some kind or another make up a long list, including the Essenes,[2] the Gnostics,[3] the Hindus,[4] the Jews,[5] the Cathars,[5] the Templars,[6] the Goliards,[7] several medieval and Early Modern Roman Catholic popes,[8] tribal religions,[9] the protestants,[10] the Anabaptists,[10] John Milton,[11] François Henri de Montmorency-Bouteville, Maréchal de Luxembourg,[12] Madame de Montespan,[13] the

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[1] Martin Ebon (ed.), *The World's Weirdest Cults* (New York: Signet, 1979); chapters (partly) concerned with Satanist 'cults' are: B.J. Baronitis, 'Beheadings in West Virginia', 39-48; Jerome Clark, 'Cattle Mutilations: Sex and Satanism?' 115-126; 'Pity the Drug-Cult Witch!' ('by Ruth Pauli, as told to Daphne Lamb'), 127-139; Jean Molina, 'Black Pope of San Francisco,' 140-151; Michael Ballantino, 'The Man Who Called Himself 'The Beast',' 152-161; Willam R. Akins, 'Hell-Fire Club,' 162-175; and Stephan A. Hoeller, 'The Real Black Mass,' 176-186.

[2] Robert Ambelain, *Adam Dieu Rouge: L'ésotérisme judéo-chrétien, la gnose et les Ophites luciférien*s *et rose + croix* (Paris: Éditions Niclaus, 1941), 161, where Ambelain calls their doctrines 'nettement luciférienne'.

[3] 'Docteur' Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle: La Franc-Maçonnerie luciférienne ou les mystères du spiritisme. Révélations complètes sur le Palladisme, la théurgie, la goétie et tout le satanisme moderne. Récits d'un témoin* 2 vols. (Paris: Delhomme & Briguet, [1892-1893]), 1:37.

[4] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle*, 1:37.

[5] Cf. Chapter I and Chapter IV.

[6] Cf. Alain Boureau, *Satan the Heretic: The Birth of Demonology in the Medieval West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 38. Also Jules Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie: Avec une étude de J.K. Huysmans* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1895), 47n ; Anton Szandor LaVey, *The Satanic Rituals* (New York: Avon Books, 1972), 55.

[7] Elliot Rose, *A Razor for a Goat: A Discussion of Certain Problems in the History of Witchcraft and Diabolism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 160-170.

[8] Cf. Karl R. H. Frick, *Satan und Die Satanisten: Ideengeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Herkunft der komplexen Gestalt 'Luzifer/Satan/Teufel', ihrer weiblichen Entsprechungen und ihrer Anhängerschaft*. 3 vols. (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1985) 2:57-62, who mentions that rumors of allegiance to the Devil circulated about Pope John XIII, Sylvester II, John XVIII, Benedictus VIII & IX, John XIX & XXI, Gregorian VII & XI, Paul II and Alexander VI.

[9] Among others, Laurent Kilger, O.S.B., 'Le diable et la conversion des païens,' in *Satan: Les Études Carmélitaines* 27 (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1948), 122-129.

[10] Cf. further on in this introduction and in Chapter I.

[11] Anton Szandor Lavey ranges him among his 'de facto Satanists' in Blanche Barton, *The Secret Life of a Satanist: The authorized biography of Anton LaVey* (London: Mondo, 1992), 4.

[12] Anton Kippenberg, *Die Sage vom Herzog von Luxemburg und die historische Persönlichkeit ihres Trägers*

Illuminati,[14] the Presbyterians,[15] Robespierre, Marat and Danton,[16] the Rosicrucians,[17] magnetism and spiritism,[18] Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi,[19] Otto von Bismarck,[20] Giacomo Leopardi,[21] Charles Baudelaire,[22] Grigori Rasputin,[23] the Chinese Tongs,[24] Karl Marx,[25] Friedrich Nietzsche,[26] The San Francisco Vigilantes,[27] Pope Pius IX and Pope Leo XIII,[28] Cardinal Mariano Rampolla,[29] Aleister Crowley,[30] J. R. R. Tolkien,[31] Robert Johnson,[32] Adolf Hitler,[33] the SS,[34] Julius Evola,[35] the New Age Movement,[36] the Wiener Aktionstheater,[37] the Beatles,[38] the Manson Family,[39] Communism,[40] McDonalds,[41] Procter & Gamble,[42] Walt

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(Niederwalluf bei Wiesbaden: Dr. Martin Sändig oHG, 1970).

[13] Among others, Hoeller, 'The Real Black Mass,' 186; see also Chapter I.

[14] Cf. Mike Hertenstein and Jon Trott, *Selling Satan: The Evangelical Media and the Mike Warnke Scandal* (Chicago: Cornerstone Press, 1993), 102-106, citing William Guy Carr's *Pawns in the Game* (1958) and Mike Warnke's *The Satan Seller* (1972).

[15] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:95, 1:184.

[16] M. J. C. Thorey, *Rapports merveilleux de Mme Cantianille B… avec le monde surnaturel*. 2 vols. (Paris: Louis Hervé, 1866), 1:40n.

[17] See Chapters III and IV.

[18] Cf. for instance Max Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française: De Cazotte à Baudelaire 1772-1861*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1960), 2:348-355.

[19] See Chapter IV.

[20] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:730.

[21] Gerhard Zacharias, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe: Die Nachtseite des Christentums. Eine Beitrag zur Phänomenologie der Religion* (München: F.A. Herbig, 1990), 132, where his unfinished hymn 'Ad Arimane' is described as 'satanistischer Kultmystik'.

[22] See intermezzo 2.

[23] Anton Szandor Lavey ranges him among his 'de facto Satanists' in Barton, *The Secret Life of a Satanist*, 4.

[24] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:37.

[25] Richard Wurmbrand, *Was Karl Marx a Satanist?* (s.l.: Diane Books, 1979).

[26] Anton Szandor Lavey ranges him among his 'de facto Satanists' in Barton, *The Secret Life of a Satanist*, 4

[27] Brad Steiger, *Sex and Satanism* (New York: Ace Publishing Corporation, 1969), 147-162, basing himself on Helen Holdredge's *The House of the Strange Woman* (1961).

[28] Joseph Boullan to Joris-Karl Huysmans, 27 February 1890, Bibliothèque National de France, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Fonds Lambert 76 (Lettres et Documents adressées par l'abbé Boullan à J.K. Huysmans), ff. 69-73, here f. 69.

[29] On the legend regarding Rampolla, see http://www.cfnews.org/ch-ramp.htm and http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discussion:Mariano_Rampolla_del_Tindaro, accessed 16 September 2011.

[30] Robert Muchembled, *A History of the Devil: From the Middle Ages to the Present*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003, 217. Cf. also Marco Pasi, *Aleister Crowley und die Versuchung der Politik*. tr. Fredinand Leopold (Graz: Ares Verlag, 2006), 243.

[31] Cf. Peter Paul Schnierer, *Entdämonisierung und Verteufelung: Studien zur Darstellungs- und Funktionsgeschichte des Diabolischen in der englischen Literatur seit der Renaissance* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2005), 183.

[32] For an interesting perspective on this stubborn blues myth, cf. http://www.luckymojo.com/crossroads.html, accessed 16 September 2011.

[33] Cf. Josef Dvorak, *Satanismus: Schwarze Rituale, Teufelswahn und Exorzismus. Geschichte und Gegenwart* (München: Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, 1993), 188.

[34] Cf. Gareth J. Medway, *Lure of the Sinister: The Unnatural History of Satanism* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 261.

[35] Pasi, *Aleister Crowley und die Versuchung der Politik*, 246.

[36] Cf. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 2.

[37] Zacharias, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe*.

[38] Http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/Evils%20in%20America/Rock-n-Roll/imagine.htm, accessed 16 September 2011.

[39] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Mephistofeles. The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1986), 253.

[40] Wurmbrand, *Was Karl Marx a Satanist?*, 67, where it is suggested that 'Communist movements are […] front organizations for occult Satanism'. See also 73-75, where Wurmbrand discloses that Lenin's tomb has been deliberately modeled on the Hellenistic altar of the 'Satanist temple at Pergamos'.

Disney,[43] Dungeons & Dragons,[44] Cardinal Ratzinger,[45] and all American presidents since George Bush Sr.[46] This enumeration is by no means exhaustive, as even a cursory reading of this book will show.

defining Satanism

If anything, this historic catalogue of presumed Satanists highlights the need for a proper demarcation of the subject. This means establishing at least a working definition of Satanism.[47] Despite the spontanuous images it conjures in the minds of most people, the significance of the designation Satanism is not so straightforward as it seems. The word and its derivation 'Satanist' appeared for the first time in French and English in the sixteenth century during the European Wars of Religion.[48] In publications from this period, Roman Catholic authors directed it against Protestant Christians, and vice versa, while both applied the epithet to Anabaptists. Their polemical use of the term did not necessarily mean that they thought their religious counterparts were self-consciously and secretly worshipping the devil – although mutual abuse might occasionally spill over into such allegations, particularly with regard to the Anabaptists – but rather that Roman Catholic veneration for 'graven images' or Protestant adherence to 'heresy' *implied* being a fellow-traveller on the bandwagon of Satan. In the early nineteenth century, the terms Satanist and Satanism acquired an even broader meaning and came to designate a person or thing with a 'Satanic character', a person or thing inherently evil or wicked. When Prosper Merimée (of *Carmen* fame) wrote in an 1842 letter to an anonymous female friend that she was making 'quite rapid progress in Satanism', he did not mean to say that she held regular rituals for the fallen angel, but that she was growing increasingly 'ironic, sarcastic, and even diabolic'.[49] Only towards the end of the nineteenth

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[41] Cf. Medway, *Lure of the Sinister*, 272.

[42] Cf. Medway, *Lure of the Sinister*, 272. In 1982, it was rumored that three 6s were discernible in the curls of the beard of the man in the Procter & Gamble trademark; the company had to assign fifteen telephone operators to answer all the calls it received about this.

[43] Http://pinballking.blogspot.com/2010/06/christina-aguilera-exposed.html, accessed 16 September 2011: 'Disney is presented as a 'wholesome' company but it is really an illuminati training camp for 'preachers of immorality''.

[44] Carl A. Raschke, *Painted Black: From Drug Killing to Heavy Metal – The Alarming True Story of How Satanism Is Terrorizing Our Communities* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 178-194.

[45] As well as among extreme protestant Christians, this idea frequently surfaces among sedevacantist Catholics; see for instance http://sedevacantisme.wordpress.com/2010/09/16/ratzinger-accomplit-le-plan-du-cardinal-sataniste-rampolla, accessed 16 September 2011.

[46] Among many websites, see for instance http://www.apfn.org/apfn/hijacking.htm, as well as the Hon. James David Manning of Atlah World Ministries preaching on President Barack Obama on 31 January 2009, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzxtH15A_D0 (both accesses 16 September 2011).

[47] Partly because of the colorful associations it evokes, Kennet Granholm proposed in 2009 to discard with the designation 'Satanism' altogether, suggesting the term 'Left Hand Path' instead for certain sections of contemporary occult subculture, including today's religious Satanists (see Kennet Granholm, 'The Left-Hand Path and Post-Satanism: The Temple of Set and the Evolution of Satanism,' in *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*, ed. Per Faxneld and Jesper Petersen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 209-228. This suggestion may be useful for the student of modern occultism, but not for the purposes of the present study; it is exactly the emergence of a veneration of Satan that is of interest here.

[48] J. A. Simpson and A. S. C Weiner, *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 14:494-495; Walther von Wartburg (ed.), *Französische Etymologischen Wörterbuch*, 25 vols. (Basel: Zbinden, 1964), 11:238.

[49] Paul Imbs and Bernard Quemada (eds.), *Trésor de la Langue Française*. 16 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 15: 78-79: 'Je vous voir faire des progrès bien rapides en satanisme. […] Vous devenez ironique, sarcastique et même diabolique.' Merimée, *Lettres à une inconnue* I, 1842, p. 77. Of course, Merimée was being ironic himself as well.

In some historiography, even of recent date, an even wider and highly confusing application of the term Satanism and diabolism is encountered, namely, as designating *any* intense preoccupation with Satan and the devil, even when resulting from intense antipathy. See, for instance, Robert Muchembled, *A History of the Devil:*

century did the word Satanism come to hold the significance that it still has for historians of religion, B-film directors, and the general public alike, namely, the intentional and explicit worship of Satan.[50] This is not to say, of course, that the concepts and practices embodied in this word did not exist prior to that time.

In this book, I will use the term Satanism only in its third, most recent significance. As a provisional hypothesis to guide us through the mire of historical material, I define Satanism as *intentional, religiously motivated veneration of Satan*. At first glance, this may seem a fairly straightforward definition that even those who are not experts may instinctively agree with. Looking more closely into the matter, however, it will soon become apparent that things are not so simple. Therefore, some prefatory clarifications.

In using the phrase *intentional* veneration, I hope to make clear that I speak of Satanism only in case of a (allegedly) purposely religious choice. Thus, I do *not* enter into interpretations of historical phenomena as 'Satanism' from a theological or philosophical viewpoint – such as, 'National Socialism was Satanism because it was an instrument of the devil in spreading evil'.[51] This kind of analysis presumes an ability to discern the 'real' place of things in the cosmic order (or disorder) and their hidden or invisible identity behind the mask of historic facts. A strong tendency towards such 'theological' definitions or identifications of Satanism is especially apparent in the large body of non- or pseudo-academic literature on the subject originating from Christian subculture(s), but it is also discernible in the rare historical accounts that Satanists themselves have given of their religion. In contrast with this, this study is about the origins and history of (assumed) intentional Satanism; in other words, it is about Satanism as a deliberate religious option clearly demarcated by (assumed) acts or utterances. Neither do I concern myself, as may be deduced from the foregoing, with suppositions about the interference of supernatural actors in this history. Whether Satan and his company have an ontologically tangible presence, and if so, in what way and through what intermediaries he chooses to operate, is beyond my range of expertise. The answers to these and comparable questions ultimately depend on personal religious (or non-religious) inclination, and cannot be decided through simple historical inquiry – although I do not presume that my own attitudes in this matter will be impossible to detect in the pages that follow.

When I talk about *religiously motivated* veneration, I mean that this veneration must have a religious character. Otherwise this would be a book not about the history of a religious movement but about the history of a mythological symbol with religious origins (although both subjects are inevitably and intricately intertwined, as we will see). Elucidating, however, what it is exactly that we mean by the word 'religious' is no mean task. As of yet, scholars have still to agree upon a proper definition of religion.[52] One of the first attempts was by the nineteenth-century historian of religion E. B. Tylor, who defined religion as 'belief in supernatural beings'.[53] This restriction of the religious domain to 'the supernatural' has now

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From the Middle Ages to the Present (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 16 ['theological satanism'], 31, 108.

[50] Imbs and Quemada give Huysmans as first reference for this new significance of Satanism (*Trésor de la Langue Française*, 15:78-79; for Huysmans, see Chapter III); in English, the Oxford English Dictionary notes the first instance of this modern significance with Arthur Lillie's 1896 *Worship of Satan in Modern France*, a publication in the wake of the Léo Taxil affair (Simpson and Weiner, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 14:494; for Taxil, see Chapter IV). The French Larousse encyclopedia of 1875 still defined Satanism as 'caractère de ce qui est satanique'; in the 1933 edition, this has become 'culte de Satan' (Cf. Von Wartburg (ed.), *Französische Etymologischen Wörterbuch*, 11:238).

[51] Aloïs Mager explicitly identifies National-Socialism and Satanism in his article 'Satan de nos jours,' in *Satan: Les Études Carmélitaines* 27 (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1948): 635-643.

[52] A useful introduction to the academic discussion can be found in Fiona Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion: An Introduction* (Malden, Ma.: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

[53] Cf. Daniel L. Pals, *Seven Theories of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 16-53.

been discarded by many historians of religion. Firstly, 'the supernatural' is a term which itself is not easy to define, and the implication would be to reduce religion to a kind of reversed communicating vessel with modern Western science (which, incidentally, is exactly what Tylor was proposing).[54] Moreover, a number of religions do not fit easily in this definition (e.g., some tribal religions, pantheism, Taoism). Many modern religious movements in particular embrace forms of religiosity that do not entail 'belief in supernatural beings' properly speaking; the various manifestations of 'self-religion' especially come to mind.[55]

Other schools of religious studies have sought to define religion by stressing social or ritual parameters. The consequences of this choice become clear when we study the definition of Satanism used by Massimo Introvigne, a leading expert on the history of esoteric movements. In Wouter Hanegraaff's *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, Introvigne defines Satanism as 'the adoration, in an organized and ritual form, of the figure known in the Bible as the devil or Satan'.[56] In his monograph *Enquête sur le satanisme*, the same definition can be found in a greater profusion of words: 'From a historical or sociological point of view,' Introvigne writes here, 'Satanism can be defined as the adoration or veneration, by groups organized as a movement, through repeated practices of a cultic or liturgical character, of the personage that is called Satan or devil in the Bible.'[57] Both variants make clear his evident adherence to notions that declare the social and the ritual to be essential components of religion properly speaking. On the contrary, I do not consider either of these formal preconditions in the demarcation of religion or Satanism. Rites and rituals, whether real or imagined, certainly play an important part in the history of Satanism. But what makes a Satanist a Satanist, whether real or imagined, is not his performance of certain ritual actions, but his professed or suspected relation with Satan. In the same way, more generally speaking, it is not the social or ritual act in itself that makes religion religious, but the implied *significance* of this act. Bowing before a king is not religion (except, of course, when this king is considered divine); bowing before a god or the image of the clan's totem is. Nor can I agree with those scholars who deem the social dimension the essential part of religion. An individual alone in his room who is praying, conducting a ritual, or giving expression to his convictions about the universe in words or art, is in my opinion essentially still *practising religion*. Especially at present, with the ever-growing fragmentising and individualisation of the Western religious landscape, it seems of crucial importance to maintain the fact that it is still religion that we encounter here.

For the purposes of this book, therefore, I opt for a broader definition of religion that can include these non-theistic varieties of human religiosity. To this end, I adopt the concise formula of Robert Bellah, who defined religion as 'a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence.'[58] I tacitly assume, by the way, that

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[54] The same problem occurs with the temptingly simple definition of religion by the Dutch scholar of religion Jan van Baal: 'All explicit and implicit notions and ideas, accepted as true, which relate to a reality which cannot be verified empirically.' (J. van Baal, 'Magic as a Religious Phenomenon,' *Higher Education and Research in the Netherlands* 7 (1963) 3/4:10-21.) In many ways, this is a mirror image of Tylor's definition, making religion, on the one hand, too narrow ('survivals' relating to that ever-shrinking part of 'reality' that is 'left over' by empirical science), and on the other hand, too broad (not all notions that cannot be verified empirically are necessarily religious).

[55] This critique was already made by Mircea Eliade, among others, who wrote in 1969: '[…] religion may still be a useful term provided we keep in mind that it does not necessarily imply belief in God, gods, or ghosts, but refers to the experience of the sacred, and, consequently, is related to the ideas of *being*, *meaning*, and *truth*.' (Cf. Mircea Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), [i].) I have not adopted Eliade's category of 'the sacred' in this study.

[56] Massimo Introvigne, 'Satanism,' in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff. 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 2:1035.

[57] Massimo Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme: Satanistes et antisatanistes du XVIIe siècle à nos jours*, trans. Philipp Baillet (Paris: Éditions Dervy, 1997), 10.

Bellah really meant to write 'a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man to *what he thinks to be* the ultimate conditions of his existence'. Furthermore, as will become evident later in this study, I adopt a broad interpretation of Bellah's 'symbolic forms and acts'; broader, possibly, than Bellah may have intended.

Shrewd readers may observe that this interpretation places the essence of the religious – that which makes a religion religion – in the suppositions it explicitly or implicitly presents regarding 'man's ultimate grounds of existence'; in other words, regarding a 'general order of existence', to borrow Clifford Geertz's celebrated phrase.[59] This is indeed my conviction. It must be made clear that this does not imply that religion is identical to individual belief. Although it might be hard to imagine how a religion could come into being with none of its original participants believing its suppositions, a religion that presents suppositions with none of its adherents individually believing them is perfectly feasible. Individual belief, that is to say, is just one possible locus of the religious; a locus, moreover, that can only be studied through its expression in external forms and acts. Neither, it should be added, does this centrality of significance imply that the study of religion must be confined to explicit doctrinal statements or the evolution of theological discourses, as more traditional 'histories of the church' were wont to do. Ritual, traditional custom, law, liturgy, and art (may) all belong to the symbolic forms and acts by which man relates himself to what he thinks to be the ultimate grounds of his existence and gives expression to suppositions about a general order of existence. In their turn, these acts and forms and expressions (whether institutional, doctrinal, ritual, or artistic) can obtain a semi-autonomous existence of their own, with their own evolution and their own history.

In applying this definition, I may label some groups as religious who would not consider themselves thus, or even categorically deny this classification. If I do so, this is partly because I believe that their rejection of the religious label is ideologically conditioned by the specific history of modern Western civilization, and that it is the task of the historian of religion to attempt to supersede such time-limited conceptions regarding his domain of investigation. This is not to diminish the significance of the religious-critical attitude that explicit or implicit self-categorizations like these express. As a matter of fact, the historical genesis of this attitude, which began roughly three centuries ago in the West, will prove to be an essential part of the story of this book. Our current use of the word 'religion' may be intimately linked with this historical process, as it presupposes a notion that the religious can be separated from other domains of human society or human existence, an idea which seems to be relatively modern.[60] This does not invalidate the use of the term, in my opinion, as the particular experience of Western civilization may well have led to genuinely valuable insights – indeed, our trust in the validity of the academic and scientific endeavour implicitly depends on this conviction. It is important to realize, however, that people in different places and in different times did not necessarily and do not necessarily share this relatively sharp categorization. Nor

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[58] Robert Bellah, 'Religious evolution,' in *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, ed. W.A. Lessa and E.Z. Vogt (New York: Grune & Stratton,1965), 73-87, here 74. Bellah's definition, by the way, is based on that of Clifford Geertz: 'religion is (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic' (cited in Bowie, *Anthropology of Religion*, 20). I prefer Bellah's reformulation, not only because of its superior terseness, but also because Geertz's definition seems to contain an inherent value judgement about the truth of religious statements that seems inappropriate for an academic study on religion.

[59] Cited in Bowie, *Anthropology of Religion*, 20.

[60] This point was forcefully made by Talal Assad in his essay 'The construction of religion as an anthropological category,' in Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 27-54. As is obvious from what follows, I do not share his conclusion that it would therefore be better to discard with definitions of religion altogether.

does it mean that we should accept without scrutiny current popular conceptions regarding religion, and what it is and is not, as the last word in matters of definition and demarcation.[61]
I am aware that Bellah's definition leaves us with certain methodological and ontological problems of its own.[62] Our purpose for the moment, however, is not to find an indisputable, watertight definition for religion, but to find a useful tool to separate genuine Satanism from the host of other phenomena that have been associated with it in prior literature or popular and theological lore. And even with a broad definition of religion such as this, I can disclose beforehand, the history of (what-may-or-may-not-be) Satanism presents us with cases that create a formidable challenge to any attempt at categorisation. It might not be coincidental that such cases often also give rise to the most tantalizing questions and insights regarding the nature of religion, Western civilization, and human nature in general.

To return to our provisional definition. In *Enquête sur le satanisme*, it might be noted, Introvigne speaks of Satanism as 'adoration or veneration' of Satan. For my own definition, I prefer the latter designation (intentional, religiously motivated *veneration* of Satan). Many practitioners of modern or even older forms of Satanism certainly would not describe their relation to Satan in terms of 'adoration' or 'worship'; and especially with regard to non-theistic religious practices, these words do indeed seem inapt. I therefore opt for the 'milder' alternative of veneration.
This is a minor issue; I note it only in passing. Of greater importance is the ambiguous interpretation that the word Satan may represent. In its simplest form, I take it to refer to any mythological being designated by the biblical name of 'Satan' or meant to make intentional reference to him. For the purposes of this study, I also include under this heading those biblical entities that were identified or closely associated with Satan in early Christian tradition, such as Lucifer, Beelzebuth, Leviathan, and the Serpent. Thus, any intentional, religious veneration of these mythological personages *after* they were integrated into the Christian hierarchy of evil is considered Satanism by me. This does not mean, of course, that the choice of (for example) Lucifer as an object of veneration, rather than Satan, is arbitrary; often it is highly significant, and wherever appropriate, I aim to indicate these significances in the chapters that follow.
What I categorically do *not* propose, however, is to extend the mythological complex encapsulated under the heading of Satan to deities or mythological entities from other religious systems because of their presumed typological associations with the Judeo-Christian Satan – e.g., as alleged representatives of evil, of the chtonic, of sexuality or vitality, or merely because of their non-Christianity or their fierce looks – as often occurs in both the Christian and the Satanist tradition. Thus, a worshipper of Shiva is not a Satanist, even though he may be considered as such by some Christians, and even though some Satanists might

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[61] A tendency to do so may be partly behind the present vogue of the concept of 'spirituality' in certain academic circles. I see no real ground for why most of the phenomena that some scholars of religion now categorize under 'spirituality' should not be considered religion, keeping in mind that the manifold varieties of human religion may show important, fundamental differences. Spirituality, to me, is the (collective or individual) experience of religion. This also closely concurs with the original significance of the term. I must admit, however, that the broad definition of religion I have adopted makes it easier to do this; with a narrower definition of religion, the range of phenomena between the religious and the secular widens considerably, and thus the need for some kind of third category.
[62] One problematic aspect of Bellah's definition is the demarcation between religion and philosophy, both of which attempt to formulate statements pertaining to man's 'ultimate conditions of existence'. These categories may indeed overlap, if we distinguish between philosophy as the rigorous application of logic to certain propositions, and the building of a systematic philosophical system about a 'general order of existence'. The latter indeed often takes on the shape of religion, with Hegel and Nietzsche as particularly striking examples. Still, areas of unease remain, for instance, with ideologies that relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence but are extremely secular, such as communism.

include Shiva in their particular pantheon or pandemonium. Neither, and this is an even more fundamental point, does Satan equate with evil. Satan as a mythological figure has been given different shapes and different meanings in the different traditions in which he appears; he is, and was, not always a representative of evil. He only assumes this role in a localised, predominantly Christian tradition that started shortly before the beginning of the Common Era and has subsequently not remained unchallenged.[63]

A final, related difficulty in defining Satanism is the question of how much 'Satan' we need before we can speak of Satanism. Some religious groups or individuals that manifest a veneration for Satan also venerate other, non-connected mythological entities – most often, surprisingly enough, stemming from the Judeo-Christian heritage, such as Jehovah, Christ, or the Virgin Mary, but sometimes originating from a wide variety of other religious sources, such as Set, Loki, Kali, Marduk, or other non-Christian deities.[64] There is, clearly, no objective criterion for establishing when the title Satanism is most appropriate in these circumstances, or when some other term might do better. In general, one should be extremely careful in applying religious labels – *any* religious labels, but that of Satanism in particular. As a rule of thumb, therefore, I only use the term Satanism when the veneration of Satan (or the biblical entities associated with him) has a clear dominance. In other cases, when veneration for the fallen angel is merely one aspect among others or a subordinate facet in a wider religious system, it seems better to speak of religions that display a *Satanist element*. In all these cases, it must be emphasized, I use the term 'Satanism' merely as a historical or sociological nomer, without any ethical or theological value judgment implied.

available literature

The difficulties of definition and the bridal gown of associations coming with the term Satanism give the task of writing its history much of its special charm, yet make it a particularly challenging undertaking as well. Another challenging factor is the exceedingly ragged state of serious research into the subject. The historian is confronted with the double-edged problem that certain aspects pertaining to the history of Satanism (early modern witchcraft, the Satanism Scare, some of the Romantic Satanists) have engendered bookshelves or even libraries of scholarly literature, while other aspects (early modern pacts with the devil, 60s 'Swinger Satanism') have been virtually or totally neglected. Thus, the historian is either wading through an enormous sea of literature or desperately looking for information in obscure or popular publications. Moreover, where there is an abundance of literature, often only a small part of this is concerned with the questions that interest a historian of Satanism, and this in a cursory manner. There is a profusion of critical research into the life and work of figures such as Byron, Blake, and Huysmans, for instance; but often matters concerning their attitudes towards Satan and Satanism are treated in passing or receive a mere mention. For

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[63] Without a proper realisation of this fact, it is hard to make sense of Satanism. This is made clear, for instance, by the confusion of the noted historian of Satan, Jeffrey Burton Russell, in the face of modern religious Satanist movements. Because Russell assigns only one valid meaning to Satan (that of the Christian symbol for evil), there can be only one genuine form of Satanism for him. 'The term Satanist is properly applied only to the tiny number who believe Satan is a personal principle to true evil, selfishness, and suffering, and who worship him as such.' – cf. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 205. Thus, he writes, 'the few eccentrics who took the view that only Satan exists and not God, or that both exist but that Satan is good and God evil, are not real Satanists […], for they were merely reversing terms emptily' (p. 205; see also p. 175); and on the other hand, clearly non-Satanist groups as the 'Jim Jones cult' can be included by him as Satanists, assumedly because they are evil, albeit under pretence of holiness (p. 253). In this way, we are confronted by the amusing paradox of the Roman Catholic Russell establishing orthodoxy in Satanism. This is all the more surprising given that his three-volume history of the devil must have made Russell eminently aware of how the character and attributes of Satan constantly change throughout history.

[64] All of which are invoked in Anton LaVey's *The Satanic Bible* (New York: Avon Books, 1969), 145-146.

many aspects of the history of Satanism, there exists no real *status quæstionis* in the academic sense of the word, or only the most rudimentary of scholarly discussion.

In a way, this applies to the history of Satanism in its totality as well. There is a small bookshelf of works that deal exclusively with this subject. Most of these, however, are either sensational pulp books of the type we encountered in the opening paragraph, or written from a religious perspective and/or within a living tradition of polemic use of the Satanism trope. The latter includes alarmist treatises from fundamentalist Christian (and increasingly also Islamic) provenance, as well as the occasional historiographical efforts from within the Satanist community itself, which often display considerably more wit and less paranoia but a similar lack of academic rigour.[65] In general, I have used these publications not as reference but as sources; that is to say, as sources for the existence of certain beliefs and ideas about Satanism. If we put these clearly unscholarly publications aside, it becomes conspicuous how few academic or academically-inclined authors have in fact attempted to give a historical overview of Satanism. The attempt has been made, however, and delving into the academic libraries of the Western world, we can find about half a dozen titles that fit the bill, particularly if our conception of 'serious historical literature' is not too narrow.[66] As an academic treatment is traditionally opened by an 'overview of the available literature', we discuss these works one by one below.

Gerhard Zacharias' book *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe: Die Nachtseite des Christentums. Eine Beitrag zur Phänomenologie der Religion* might be an appropriate starting point.[67] Originally published in 1964, and since reprinted four times, this monograph breathes much of the attitudes of its time of conception. Zacharias (a former Roman Catholic priest turned Greek Orthodox pastor and Jungian therapist) describes Satanism as the non-dualistic 'night-side of Christianity'; an outlet for the 'Dionysian energies' repressed by the Christian religion.

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[65] We will have occasion to encounter some of this theologically-flavoured literature in Chapters IV and V. A mild, but nevertheless illustrative example is Bernhard Wenisch, *Satanismus: Schwarze Messen – Dämonenglauben – Hexenkulte* (Mainz: Mathhias-Grünewald Verlag, 1988), issued in the Lutheran-Catholic series 'Unterscheidung. Christliche Orientierung im religiösen Pluralismus', intended to give practical information to believers in the labyrinth of multireligiosity. The book is based on cursory reading, magazine articles, and bad source material; the author, for instance, reproduces without questioning the claim of SRA alarmists that 'thousands of children become a victim to cults of Satan every year', while giving as reference only the article of 'ein Beobachter der amerikanische Szene' in a regional church periodical (p. 29-30). Such instances of overly rash conclusions based upon dubious literature from 'expert' coreligionists are unfortunately rather typical of this type of literature.
Histories of Satanism from Satanists' points of view are rarer, given the marginality of this religious subculture. One example that might be mentioned is Gavin Baddely, *Lucifer Rising: Sin, Devil Worship & Rock 'n 'Roll* (London: Plexus, 1999), which is insufficiently annotated for scholarly use but invaluable for its interviews with prominent contemporary Satanists.

[66] As mentioned above, there exists a relatively extensive literature on the Satanism Scare of the closing decades of the previous millennium, and often these publications contain a few pages or a chapter on the wider historical background and/or on currently practised forms of actual Satanism. I have not included these in my overview here. The same applies to books and articles which concentrate on the emergence and evolution of religious Satanism in the second half of the twentieth century. Recent works of preponderantly young scholars have given this field of research an important impetus towards maturity. Also not included in this miniature bibliographical essay are shorter articles and encyclopaedia entries on the subject. Mention should be made here of the excellent article by Jean La Fontaine, 'Satanism and Satanic Mythology,' in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 6: The Twentieth Century*, ed. Willem de Blécourt, R. Hutton and J. La Fontaine (London: Athlone Press, 1999), 81-140, which may serve as the best short introduction to the subject currently available in the English language.
I was unable to consult Per Faxneld's *Mörkrets apostlar: Satanism i äldre tid* (Ouroboros: Sundbyberg, 2006) because it is, unfortunately, only published in Swedish, but do not doubt its excellence.

[67] Gerhard Zacharias, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe: Die Nachtseite des Christentums. Eine Beitrag zur Phänomenologie der Religion* (München: F. A. Herbig, 1990).

This allows him to connect a great deal of phenomena with Satanism that to the unaware reader might not seem to be directly connected with it, such as the above-mentioned 'Aktionstheater' of the Vienna avant-garde of the Sixties, with which Zacharias was personally acquainted.[68] The result is rather chaotic; and to add to this chaos, his book does not in fact purport to be a history of Satanism at all, but rather a 'phenomenological' treatment of the subject. This means that clearly fabricated allegations of devil-worship are indiscriminately mixed with reports of actual instances of the practice of Satanism, because both, according to the author, have equal 'religion-phenomenological and psychological' reality. This might be an incorrect understanding of the nature of phenomenology: of course, mere accusations of Satanism and actually practised forms both have a certain presence in reality, but they are not real in the same way. At any rate, it proves an unworkable starting-point, even for Zacharias himself, it seems, given the many historical statements he nevertheless strews across the pages of his book. As a coherent history of Satanism, thus, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe* rather disappoints. The most important reason one might have for consulting the book is the wealth of original source materials it presents, both in their original languages and in German translation.

Much the same applies to Karl H. Frick's three-volume *Satan und Die Satanisten: Ideengeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Herkunft der komplexen Gestalt 'Luzifer/Satan/Teufel', ihrer weiblichen Entsprechungen und ihrer Anhängerschaft*, published 1982-1985.[69] This work displays erudition of an impressive but slightly mad kind. Most conspicuously, Frick seems to have fallen for the popular misconception that equates orgies and sex rites with Satanism. In the first volume, which deals with all kinds of devil and devil-like figures in antique and premodern religion, we are confronted with deliciously irrelevant diversions about subjects like sacred orgies, anthropophagy, ritual defloration, and 'sacred sodomy'.[70] The second volume is about Satanists before 1900, while the last volume covers twentieth-century Satanism. Here again, however, Frick's lack of a clear delimitation of his subject matter plays tricks on him, inducing him to include groups in his history which have no place for Satan in their theology or philosophy at all, like the Christian Agapemonites in the nineteenth century, or the left-radical Rote Armee Fraktion and the existentialist philosophers in the twentieth century.[71]

The German-language region seems to be particularly rich in historical treatments of Satanism. A third work that has its provenance here is Josef Dvorak's *Satanismus: Schwarze Rituale, Teufelswahn und Exorzismus. Geschichte und Gegenwart*. First published in 1989, this books stands out because it's the only one in this list written by a self-proclaimed Satanist. Dvorak was an Austrian seminary student who became a left-wing therapist in the Vienna of the Sixties, where he co-founded the ('Satanist') *Aktionstheater*. After he encountered Satan during an LSD trip, he became a 'Satanologist' (as he likes to call himself), gaining notoriety when the Crowleyanite rituals he conducted were broadcasted on Austrian television.[72] His book, unfortunately, betrays the fact that it has been written by an occultist rather than by a professional historian. A lot of psychoanalysis, number magic, Hitler, and

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[68] Biographical facts on Zacharias from Josef Dvorak, *Satanismus: Schwarze Rituale, Teufelswahn und Exorzismus. Geschichte und Gegenwart* (München: Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, 1993), 83-85.
[69] Karl R. H. Frick, *Satan und Die Satanisten: Ideengeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Herkunft der komplexen Gestalt 'Luzifer/Satan/Teufel', ihrer weiblichen Entsprechungen und ihrer Anhängerschaf*. 3 vols. (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1982-1985). I did not manage to locate the third volume of this work.
[70] Frick, *Satan und Die Satanisten*, 1:19-29; 1:210-233, 1:306-309, 1:303.
[71] Frick, *Satan und Die Satanisten*, 2:229-231. Joachim Schmidt, *Satanismus: Mythos und Wirklichkeit* (Marburg: Diagonal-Verlag, 1992), 5.
[72] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josef_Dvorak, accessed 29 September 2011.

personal reminiscences meet the reader proceeding through its pages. In the end, *Satanismus* is best regarded as an interesting rollercoaster ride through Dvorak's own bookshelves: highly readable, certainly, but overly *improvistu* and insufficiently annotated.

At the moment, the best German-language introduction to the subject of Satanism is without doubt *Satanismus: Mythos und Wirklichkeit* by Joachim Schmidt, published by the Marburg-based Diagonal-Verlag in 1992. It provides a clear-headed, balanced, and to-the-point account of the history of Satanism. The most important objection that can be raised against Schmidt's book is that it is indeed an introduction, and with a mere 231 pages and a total of 115 endnotes is not sufficient for the specialist, or the general reader with more than a general interest in the subject. Another objection might be that while the varieties of Satanism that Schmidt distinguishes certainly are lucidly described, his descriptions are not connected in a historical account that provides deeper or original insights. Probably worse is the fact that he succeeds in doing something for which academic writers are often, and often justly, derided: turning a gloriously wild and fascinating subject into something that is basically rather boring.

Given that they were the cradle both of today's living tradition of religious Satanism and of the most recent wave of Satanism anxieties to date, the almost total lack of full-blown academic treatment of the history of Satanism from Anglophonic regions is striking. I personally am aware of just two exceptions. The first, Arthur Lyons, *The Second Coming: Satanism in America* from 1970, I hesitate to include in this survey.[73] It was reissued in an updated version under the title *Satan Wants You* in 1988, with a revised text to account for the Satanism Scare that had recently swept over the United States.[74] This revision did not notably affect the part of the book concerned with Satanism's pre-1966 history, which features scholarship that was already outdated in 1970 (with an uncritical implementation of Margaret Murray's thesis regarding European witchcraft as the most flagrant example). The almost non-existent annotation suggests that this book was never meant for a specialist readership at all. Nevertheless, it is still frequently quoted in scholarly literature, predominantly with regard to the emergence of 1960s California Satanism. Even here, however, the book should be used with caution; much of its information was derived directly from Anton LaVey, with whom Lyons was personally acquainted, and the author's all-too-evident sympathy for the self-styled Black Pope has invited just criticism.[75]

A much better English-language history is provided by *Lure of the Sinister: The Unnatural History of Satanism*, by the English freelance writer Gareth J. Medway, published in 2001 by New York University Press.[76] This is, it must be said, a bit of an oddball work. Despite its pulpy title, it is well researched and decently annotated. Despite being well researched and decently annotated, it is a rollicking read: Medway's is one of the few serious titles on the subject that actually made me laugh. What, again, is lacking, is a coherent historical vision on the emergence of Satanism. Medway's amusing style makes one almost forget that his book is in fact largely a collection of anecdotes. In addition, the main thrust of the book seems to be in debunking myths of Satanism; actually practised Satanism is treated in a series of often unconnected asides, often of a brevity verging on rashness (for instance, when Medway calls

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[73] Arthur Lyons, *The Second Coming: Satanism in America* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1970).
[74] Arthur Lyons, *Satan Wants You: The Cult of Devil Worship in America* (New York: Mysterious Press, 1988).
[75] Chris Mathews, *Modern Satanism: Anatomy of a Radical Subculture* (Westport, Ct.: Praeger, 2009), 173-174, who even claims that Lyons was a member of Anton LaVey's Church of Satan. LaVey himself strongly endorsed Lyons' book as 'concise and perceptive' in his column in *The Exploiter* on 31 January 1971 (reprinted in Anton Szandor Lavey, *Letters from the Devil* (s.l.: Underworld Amusements, 2010), n.p.).
[76] Gareth J. Medway, *Lure of the Sinister: The Unnatural History of Satanism* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

Baudelaire the first modern Satanist without really elaborating on his statement).[77] This emphasis is understandable: Medway clearly wrote the book in reaction to the Satanist Scare of the 1980s and 1990s, which takes up most of the book. Medway's own (freely admitted) background as 'a Pagan and a priest of Themis in the Fellowship of Isis' might have been another factor in determining this emphasis. It might be best, therefore, to read *Lure of the Sinister* for what it is: primarily a book aimed at dispelling some of the tenacious myths that surrounded Satanism in the 1990s, less a work about what it actually was and how it came to be.

Without a doubt the best overview of the history of Satanism currently available is Massimo Introvigne's *Enquête sur le Satanisme: Satanistes et antisatanistes du XVIIe siècle à nos jours*, which originally appeared in 1994 in Italian under the title *Indagine sul satanismo*.[78] Introvigne, who has an academic background in philosophy and law, is a noted specialist in the field of new religious movements and cofounder of CESNUR, a research institute in Turin dedicated to the study of new varieties of religion. His *Enquête sur le Satanisme* may be considered the pioneering study of the field, densely packed with information about practically every individual and every group historically connected with the subject. He neatly avoids wandering into endless irrelevancies by adopting a sharp definition of Satanism (which we have amply discussed above); in addition to this, he manages to give a coherent narrative of the seemingly chaotic history of the subject. To this purpose, he proposes to approach the history of Satanism as the constant ebb and flood of Satanism, on the one hand, and anti-Satanism, on the other hand. Briefly summarized: every time Satanism surfaces in the West, this engenders a reaction in the larger society. This anti-Satanism, however, tends to succumb to exaggerations; and in the wake of its ensuing discredit, new Satanist movements arise.[79] Using this model, Introvigne is able to draw a creative connection between the many appearances of Satanism as a mythical and polemic construct, and the historical instances of actually practiced veneration for the fallen angel.

I would like, firstly, to eulogize Introvigne's tremendously rich book, without which I could not have written this study, or at least would have faced an immensely more daunting task. The fact that I disagree with Introvigne's findings and conclusions on more than one occasion in this book does not mean that I do not appreciate his work. Rather, it is because Introvigne can be considered the sole conversation partner in this venture, the only earlier author to propose an elaborate reconstruction of the historical genesis of contemporary religious Satanism. On this level, the scholarly discussion in this book virtually amounts to a dialogue with *Enquête sur le Satanisme*. When I differ in opinion with Massimo Introvigne about specific facts or episodes in the history of Satanism, I have indicated such in the text or the accompanying notes. Here, I would like to single out some more general differences in approach between his study and mine which can best be made explicit beforehand.

First, Introvigne uses a very specific definition of Satanism, and begins his history with the first actual instance he knows that fits his definition, the Affaire de Poisons at the end of the seventeenth century. Thus, the long history of Christian mythmaking about Satanism that preceded the seventeenth century does not receive any substantial treatment in his account. (In the same way, the Romantic Satanists are completely ignored, probably because Introvigne does not consider them religious Satanists – a conclusion I share, but for different reasons.) These choices automatically give his story a certain direction and inclination. Reading Introvigne, one gets the impression that it was the emergence of actual Satanism that initiated

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[77] Medway, *Lure of the Sinister*, 12.

[78] I have consulted the French translation, Massimo Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme: Satanistes et antisatanistes du XVIIe siècle à nos jours*, transl. Philipp Baillet (Paris: Éditions Dervy, 1997).

[79] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 11.

the flux of Satanism/anti-Satanism, while in reality, the stereotype of the Satanist – even if he or she was not called that – had been present long before. In my view, this way of presenting Satanism creates a certain imbalance vis à vis the historical facts.
A second weak point is Introvigne's pendulum of Satanism/anti-Satanism itself. It remains vague how a waning credibility of anti-Satanism would induce people to become Satanists. If I understand Introvigne correctly, he says that Satanism has actually always been present throughout modern history – somewhere hidden in the underground of occultism, where it was born and is continually reborn as 'an extreme version of the tendencies and contradictions' present in society at large.[80] The periodical waning of anti-Satanist sentiments merely allows this underground Satanism to take center stage again and recruit new disciples, thereby provoking a new wave of anti-Satanism.[81] This idea seems overly schematic to me, and Introvigne's eagerness to distinguish historical periods of Satanism and anti-Satanism sometimes induces him to see Satanists where there are no clear historical indications of their presence. In this study, I would like to propose a more subtle interplay between anti-Satanism and Satanism, which are both involved in the creation and transmission of a certain tradition *about* Satanism. And I would like to introduce a third partner in this exchange, namely, fiction, or the imaginative arts – in our case predominantly literature.[82] In this respect, among others, the Romantic Satanists clearly have their appropriate place.
Of course, these matters partly reflect the inevitable consequences of a choice of approach: one cannot write about every possible aspect of a subject. A different approach might thus provide additional insights. This also applies to a third remark I wish to make. Introvigne labels religious Satanism as a typically modern phenomenon, even calling it the Jungian shadow of modernity. [83] Nowhere, however, does he go into detail regarding what exactly the relation between Satanism and the emergence of modern society might be. Even more fundamentally, the historical reasons for Satanists having become Satanists remain rather obscure in *Enquête sur le Satanisme*. Certainly, the particular historical context of each new Satanist movement is described, but one does not really come to *understand* their motives through the pages of Introvigne's book. They mostly remain historical occurrences, not fellow human beings who make choices that we can understand people can make in their given historical circumstances. Again, this could partly be a mere matter of methodological or stylistic choice. But I suspect that Introvigne's personal inclinations may have played a role as well.[84] Although he never steps outside the pale of academic integrity in *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, reading this book leaves one with the impression that his sympathies lie elsewhere.

hypothesis, framework, & methodology of this study

While it is essential to remember, as we have seen, that veneration for Satan does not equal veneration of evil, it is, of course, precisely the traditional Christian role of Satan as chief mythical representative of malevolence that makes the existence of a religious Satanism fascinating. *How did it come about that individuals and groups in modern Western society came to venerate a former symbol of evil?* That is the prime question that the existence of modern Satanism brings up, and the central question that runs through this book.
To help answer this question, I adopted two tools for categorization that play a prominent role in the chapters that follow. These are *attribution* and *identification*; attribution being the

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[80] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 11.
[81] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 11.
[82] Introvigne does discuss various works of literature in *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, but only in so far as they might offer any clues about actually practiced, ritual Satanism.
[83] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 16, 394.
[84] Introvigne is involved in the ultra-conservative Roman Catholic organization Alleanza Cattolica and in various Italian neo-conservative endeavors. See the extensive Wikipedia page on him: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massimo_Introvigne, accessed 11 October 2011.

mechanism of attributing the practice of Satanism to others, identification that of identifying oneself with this attributed concept of Satanism, or with the figure of Satan, or both.[85] This allows us to sift through historical reports of Satanism and separate them according to whether they ascribe practises or ideas to others (mostly as part of a polemical discourse) or describe actual practised forms of Satanism. Clearly, however, there is more involved in selecting this angle of approach. It implies that I believe that attribution preceded identification, and that grasping and showing this fact is an essential prerequisite for placing Satanism in its proper historical context. As mentioned above, I have chosen a different approach here from that implicitly or explicitly selected by Introvigne in his *Enquête sur le satanisme*. It also implies that I consider Satanism to be an *invented tradition*, to use the well-known phrase of H.B. Hobsbawm.[86] Although this approach to the subject, like any other, inevitably entails certain preconceptions, I hope its usefulness will be borne out in the pages that follow.

To ensure clarity, it might be advisable to specify the two possible meanings of 'attribution' in the context of Satanism. First, attribution may refer to the application of what I have termed the 'theological' definition of Satanism to certain groups or individuals; that is, designation of these as Satanists out of general theological or philosophical considerations without necessarily postulating the existence of a sociologically real and intentionally practised veneration for Satan. For example, nihilists may sometimes be called Satanists because they 'satanically' disrupt society; they do not stage rituals to worship the devil. Second, attribution may entail the ascription to others of an intentional, religiously motivated veneration for Satan; in other words, of actually and deliberately *practised* Satanism according to the definition used in the present work. The last variant is the most important for our investigation; but the two are intimately linked to each other in the evolution of Satanism, and continue to exist side by side.

In practise, this means the chapters that follow have a threefold thrust. First, we search for real Satanists, using our provisional definition and the concept of attribution to determine the veracity of historical descriptions of Satanism and describe their place in the wider framework of history. Second, we indicate how these cases of ascribed or actual Satanism contributed to the conceptual construct of Satanism. Third, we aim to locate and describe the transition from attribution to identification that gave rise to (modern) religious Satanism, as well as its historical context.[87] This last aspect means that this study includes extensive discussions of groups or individuals that fall outside the scope of our definition of Satanism properly speaking, such as the Romantic Satanists and their heirs in nineteenth-century (counter-) culture. I have chosen to do this where I believe they embody or represent crucial steps in the shift from attribution to identification, or make clear in what way the emergence of modern

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[85] For a theoretical framework relating to 'attribution' and 'identification', see Wolfgang Lipp, 'Außenseiter, Häretiker, Revolutionäre: Gesichtspunkte zur systematischer Analyse,' in *Religiöse Devianz in christlich geprägten Gesellschaften: Vom hohen Mittelalter bis zur Frühaufklärung*, ed. Dieter Fauth and Daniela Müller (Würzburg: Religion & Kultur Verlag, 1999), 12-26.

[86] Cf. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983), 1-14. Hobsbawm's concept of 'invented tradition' has not remained uncriticized – see Joseph Mali, *Mythistory: The Making of Modern Historiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 7-8, for a résumé of some of the most important criticism. For our present exploration, however, it remains a good starting point, without obliging us to accept Hobsbawm's more reductionist ideas.

[87] This way of looking at the history of modern religious Satanism has some antecedents in the prior literature. Despite the differences already indicated, it has obvious affinities with Introvigne's model of Satanism and anti-Satanism. Jean La Fontaine also suggested a similar approach in his long article on Satanism, distinguishing between alleged and self-styled Satanists, although he does not elaborate on the connection between these two categories (see especially 'Satanism and Satanic Mythology', 81). Schmidt, *Satanismus*, 10, also makes useful suggestions about the interactions between 'theologische Satanslehere', 'projizierte Satanismus', and 'positiver expliziter Satanismus', again without giving these much application in his book.

religious Satanism is linked to the emergence of modern Western society. For the same reasons, I discuss certain cases of evident attribution more extensively than they might be thought to merit at first glance.

There have also been methodological considerations of a more practical kind. As we have noted already, the history of Satanism extends over a period of hundreds of years, while the historical genesis of Satan may date back almost three millennia. It is clearly impossible for a single person with limited time at his disposal to give an account covering such a period of time based on a comprehensive examination of primary sources. Especially with regard to the subjects covered in Chapter I, I have relied heavily on secondary literature (secondary literature, that is, by specialists on the specific historical periods or episodes under consideration; only in exceptional cases have I relied on general histories of Satanism as my only reference). Even here, nevertheless, I have attempted to remain in touch with the buried realities of history by consulting key primary texts, and in order to enable the reader to do likewise, I have freely strewn samples of this material throughout the text. For the subsequent chapters, I have profited extensively from the work of earlier scholarship as well; in addition, however, I have chosen to anchor my interpretations in a wide reading of published original texts of every description. For Chapter III, moreover, I have dug deeply into primary sources *strictu sensu* (mostly letters and personal documents by Huysmans and Boullan or their consorts), making this chapter the only part of my study where I ventured into the detailed archival research for which I was originally trained at university. Yet the added value of this book, I hasten to add, does not lie in the unearthing of new historical information from archival sources. Rather, it is to be found in its fresh take on a tangled historical subject that has received scarce academic attention and that has seldom been presented with ample breadth and precision in the past.

The breadth of this book's subject has also enforced other limitations on the scope of my investigation. For practical reasons, it was necessary to focus my research on a particular period of history. Because of this, I chose to concentrate especially on the nineteenth century; a lucky choice, it turned out, as this period of history proved to be a vital stage in the transition from attribution to identification that was essential in the emergence of modern Satanism. In addition to this chronological emphasis, I was also forced to adopt geographical limitations in my choice of material. To some extent, these were dictated by the subject matter itself. If we define Satanism as intentional, religious veneration of Satan, it is a phenomenon that can only occur in societies that are part of or have been in contact with the Judeo-Christian heritage. Within this spectrum, my focus is essentially directed towards Western civilization. Thus the Islamic world was excluded from this survey, although it adopted the Judeo-Christian Satan and developed its own variety of views on him.[88] In the second chapter,

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[88] Islam adopted an earlier Christian apocryphal account according to which Satan was cast out of heaven because he refused to bow before the newly created Adam when Allah ordered him to do so. Some medieval Sufi mystics developed remarkable theories about this occurrence which may be said to contain an element of Satanism, describing Satan as the perfect monotheist (because he refused to kneel before any being other than Allah) and/or a model for the faithful striving for unity with the divine (who is similarly cut off from Allah because of the paradoxes of the latter's commands). See on this intriguing subject Peter J. Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblīs in Sufi Psychology*. Studies in the History of Religions no. 44 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), and Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), particularly 62-77, 193-199.
Also interesting with respect to Satanism are the *yezidi*, a religious group from Kurdistan that numbers between 150,000 and 300,000 adherents and venerates Melek Tawus, the 'Peacock Angel'. Scholarship is still divided on the question whether this angel can be identified as Satan. There is also divergence about the origins of their religion: Peter Awn, for instance, maintains that they essentially present a local outgrowth of Sufi theology (*Satan's Tragedy and Redemption*, 196-917), while the Iranist Kreyenbroek claims they are rooted in Iranian

which deals with the Romantic Satan, English and French literature forms the principal dish, with some extensions into the other European literatures; time and means prohibited a proper exploration of, for instance, the German literature, although I think this would most certainly have added interesting additional insights. The third chapter, about Huysmans, is quite naturally focused on France, while the fourth chapter predominantly deals with France as well, with important ramifications, however, for the wider Roman Catholic world.

As I approached the end of my PhD appointment, it turned out that even these self-imposed limitations would not be sufficient. Unlike some of the exact sciences, genuine historical research can not be conducted according to protocol. The historian is bound to encounter surprises in the dark recesses of the past; in addition, his material will inevitably confront him with new questions to answer, and new ways to see his subject matter. Although these unexpected manifestations of the fertile chaos of reality often render the most interesting historical findings and insights, they seem impossible to fit in the managerial schemata of present-day academic practise. As a result, not all questions with which I began this project have received an answer. In particular, the central question formulated at the beginning of this section – how did it come about that individuals and groups in modern Western society came to venerate a former symbol of evil? – is partly kept hanging in suspense. The wealth of historical material and new academic *pistes* that I encountered in the ninenteenth century prevented me from continuing the lines from this study into the twentieth century in a planned fifth chapter. Although the story of the present four chapters is perfectly readable on its own, and the conclusions they propose present valuable contributions to the scholarly exploration of the early history of Satanism, the narrative of this dissertation thus remains partially uncompleted.
I apologize for this, and assure the reader that I have striven valiantly. From an academic perspective, the lines from the nineteenth century (and before) that are described with some detail in this work virtually beg to be continued and connected with the current practise of religious Satanism as it arose in the latter half of the twentieth century. Further historical research is clearly required, and would certainly render important insights into the historical evolution of present-day religious Satanism. For this reason, I have purposely chosen to end this dissertation not with a (makeshift) conclusion, but rather with an epilogue that is intended to become an intermezzo.

Zoroastrian and pre-Zoroastrian beliefs that antedate Islam (Cf. Philip G. Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism – Its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), especially 58-61, 94-95). Both these examples of possible 'Satanism' within the Islamic world represent autonomous religious developments that have no real connection with Western early modern or modern religious Satanisms – although some modern religious Satanists may make occasional references to the yezidi (see, for instance, the alleged yezidi rite in Anton Szandor Lavey's *The Satanic Rituals* (New York: Avon Books, 1972), 151-172).

Chapter I
The Christian Invention of Satanism

The concept of Satanism is an invention of Christianity. As we will see presently, it was within the context of Christian religion – and of a society shaped by it – that the idea of Satanism first arose.[89] In addition, the emergence of Satanism is fundamentally linked to Christianity by the pivotal role this religion played in the proliferation of the concept of Satan. If we provisionally define Satanism as intentional religious veneration of Satan, it follows that there can be no Satanism without (a) Satan. Thus, recorded occurrences of Satanism (real or imagined) can not date back to 'time immemorial', as is often assumed, but must necessarily postdate the appearance of Satan himself, whose existence is first attested in certain parts of Jewish scripture written approximately in the sixth century before our era.
Because of its evident relevance for the eventual formation of Satanism, this chapter will open with a short account of the genesis of the mythological entity known as Satan. We then follow the trail of the concept of Satanism as it arose and developed within the Judeo-Christian world. At the same time, we will keep a watchful eye on the reality behind the concept and consider the presence of real forms of Satanism in pre-modern and early modern history. In particular, we discuss the so-called Affair of the Poisons from late seventeenth-century France, as well as some other specific instances of possible Satanism from the early modern era. By the time we arrive there, however, we will have cut a path through roughly two millennia of history. First, we will start our tour of exploration at its beginning, that is, with a concise biography of the devil himself.

a short history of Satan[90]

From early on in history, humans have attested a tendency to blame or fear spiritual entities for causing misfortune. In local communities, misfortune was associated with certain places,

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[89] A sweeping statement such as this, of course, immediately calls for qualification. Clearly, there has never existed one monolithic 'Christian' institution or identity, but rather a wide variety of religious manifestations in time and space that can be brought together under the umbrella term 'Christianity'. It is impossible, however, to write general history without writing generalizations. For some problems regarding the scholarly use of the terms 'Christian' and 'Christianity', see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 'The Dreams of Theology and the Realities of Christianity,' in *Theology and Conversation. Towards a Relational Theology*, ed. J. Haers and P. De Mey (Leuven: Peeters/Leuven University Press, 2003), 709-733. Even more problematic for the historian are the demarcations and historical relations between 'heterodoxy' and 'orthodoxy'; the latter, in current scholarship, is usually regarded as being formulated only in reaction to the former. See for this point Daniela Müller, 'Aspekte der Ketzerverfolgung unter den römischen Kaisern bis Justinian,' *The Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 60 (2008) 1-4:175-193, there 175-176.

[90] For its general outlines, this section mostly draws from Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and the relevant entries in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*: C. Breytenbach and P. L. Day, 'Satan,' in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 726-732, and G.J. Riley, 'Devil,' ibidem, 244-249. Also consulted were the three volumes about the devil by Jeffrey Burton Russell: *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977); *Lucifer: The devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); *Mephistofeles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), digested by the author himself in *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).
For broader insights in these sections, and indeed in this entire chapter and entire book, I am greatly indebted to the monograph of David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate. Rumors of Demonic Conspiracy and Ritual Abuse in History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

animals, or people, with archaic deities, or with certain times of the year when spirits roamed. In more centralized societies, religious specialists compiled inventories of spiritual beings responsible for misfortune in ritual texts and long lists of names. Knowing the correct appellation of these potentially dangerous beings offered some measure of control and the opportunity to protect oneself through ritual.[91] However, the boundary lines between spiritual beings that brought misfortune and those that did not were not clearly drawn, and fluctuated according to place, time, ethnic identity, and profession. This ambivalence of the spirit world was a feature most ancient religions shared. Ancient Greek religion provides a well-known illustration of this phenomenon. The gods of Olympus displayed behaviour that might be described as basically amoral. They were generally well-disposed towards man, but also capable of doing harm when thwarted. Their opponents, the titans, stood for the unruly forces of primeval chaos which had to be combated and subdued to allow the ordered, habitable world to exist. No strict ethical or ontological juxtaposition between titans and Olympic gods existed, however, as is demonstrated by the fact that Zeus himself originally sprang from the race of the former. The term 'demon' (daimon) was similarly devoid of exclusively malevolent implications, and was liberally applied to both greater and lesser divine beings.[92] According to Plato, demonic possession was responsible for passionate feelings of love, prophetic trance, and insanity, and even the latter was not considered simple misfortune, but a sign of the presence of the gods conferring divinatory powers. Socrates (Plato tells us) claimed to be inspired by such a personal δαιμον.

The moral ambiguity in Greek religion was characteristic of conceptions about the spiritual sphere in the ancient world.[93] In formulas of exorcism and protection from this period, the spiritual beings that may bring misfortune include entities personifying the chaotic, classes of beings preying on man, gods of neighbouring peoples, and local gods that could be beseeched by enemies to do one harm. Sometimes, these spells end with a plea to protect the supplicant against 'every god and every goddess who assumes manifestations when they are not appeased' – evidently out of concern that a spiritual being whose name was forgotten in the list might otherwise pierce the protective shield established by ritual.[94] The same divine or superhuman entities might thus fulfil both 'malign' and 'benign' roles, depending on the circumstances. On a macrocultural level, historical struggles among nations might be reflected in the topography of the spiritual realm as well. Where one culture conquered or submerged another, the conquered set of gods was often assimilated into the pantheon of the conqueror or denigrated into lesser, generally harmful entities. In addition, divergent cultural or linguistic evolutions could lead to strikingly different ascriptions in the world of the gods. A celebrated, often quoted example of the latter phenomenon is the case of the *asuras* and *devas* in Indo-Iranian religion. In the Indian Rig Veda, *ásura* meant something like 'lord', especially in the significance of 'leader of a fighting force'; it could be applied to both friend and foe. Later on, the *asuras* became a specific class of beings that was considered inimical to the *devas*, the

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[91] Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 21. A concise overview of spiritual beings in various religious traditions can be found in the article 'Demons and Spirits' by L. H. Gray and others, in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. J. Hastings, 12 vols. (Edingburgh: T&T Clark, 1911), 4:565-635

[92] Cf. G. J. Riley, 'Demon,' in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 235-240; and Keimpe Algra, 'Stoics on Souls and Demons: Reconstructing Stoic demonology,' in *Demons and the Devil in Ancient and Medieval Christianity*, ed. Nienke Vos and Willemien Otten. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae: Texts and Studies of Early Christian Life and Language, no. 108 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 71-96, there 74.

[93] See for this point with regard to the Meso-American gods: Michael T. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 169-181, especially 177-179. For similar notions in Hindu religion, see John Chethimattam, 'The Concept and the Role of the Demon in Indian Thought,' in *Le Défi Magique II: Satanisme, sorcellerie*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Martin and Massimo Introvigne (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1994), 311-320.

[94] Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 18, citing an Egyptian amulet; cf. 16-22 for more examples.

Vedic gods. In Iranian religion, meanwhile, 'ahura' retained its old significance of 'lord', even becoming part of the appellation of the supreme god, Ahura Mazda. At the same time, the warrior-like 'daevas' were relegated to the status of hostile spirits.[95]

A sharp division in the divine domain between a 'good' and a 'bad' (set of) god(s) can be considered a relatively novel innovation in the history of religion. The Egyptian god Seth in its later aspects may provide a rare, tentative instance of the evolution of such a spiritual representative of evil. Egyptian religion, one of the most ancient we know about, tells about a god of origin called Atum, 'The Complete One'. From him all other gods sprang. One of these was Seth, god of the desert and of the wastelands, 'great in strength'. The Dutch Egyptologist Te Velde, in his authoritative dissertation on the subject, characterized him as a 'god of confusion'. He was a disturber of order, a bringer of storm and tumult, a 'hot tempered, lecherous god' who killed his brother Osiris and sexually harassed Osiris's son Horus.[96] But despite these seemingly unpleasant traits, it would be dangerously anachronistic to describe him as an incorporation of absolute evil. Rather, Seth represented a necessary aspect by which the divine manifested itself. As one of the fiercer aspects of the divine, he is sometimes depicted as a protector of the sun barque during its nightly voyage, defending it against the Apopis snake, an entity of chaos that threatens to devour the sun.[97] His cult flourished in certain parts of Egypt, with faithful followers giving their children names like 'Seth is great', 'Seth is gracious', and 'Seth rules'.[98]

As god of the desert, Seth was also associated with foreign lands and foreign people. Names of foreign gods in international treaties, for instance, were usually translated as 'Seth' in the Egyptian versions of the texts. When Egypt experienced a period of territorial expansion under the Rammesides, the cult of Seth was greatly stimulated; several Rammaside pharaos took on a second name incorporating that of Seth. As the 'divine foreigner', the god in a way represented the new, non-Egyptian subjects of the pharaoh. This association, Te Velde holds, opened the door for the eventual demonisation of Seth. When Egypt embarked on a long period of foreign domination after the invasion of the Assyrians, Seth became the symbolic representative of alien rule. His name and image were erased from monuments and inscriptions; a ritual 'to overthrow Seth and his gang' was enacted in Egyptian temples, during which the disfavoured god was addressed as 'lord of lies', 'king of deceit', and 'gangleader of criminals'.[99] Yet this demonisation of Seth was never universal, it seems, and as late as the Roman period, we can find indications that Seth was still worshipped in outlying oases.[100]

Leaving aside the equivocal case of Seth, Zoroastrianism must be considered the first religion that presents us with a supreme mythological representative of evil. Founded by Zoroaster or Zarathustra between 600 and 1000 years before Christ, this innovative Iranian religion reinterpreted the world in radical dualist terms. From the beginning, it claimed, two spiritual entities opposed each other in the universe: Ahura Mazdā, or Ormuzd, the principle of goodness and light, and Angra Mainyu, or Ahreman, the principle of darkness and evil. Initially, Angra Mainyu was a general designation that simply meant 'evil spirit'. As Zoroastrianism evolved, it gradually developed into a proper name for the deity of evil.[101] In

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[95] Wash Edward Hale, *Ásura – in Early Vedic Religion* (Dehli: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), especially 180-181, 193.

[96] H. te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of his Role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, Probleme der Ägyptologie, no. 6 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 25, 59. Although he was ritually deprecated for it in the cult of Osiris, even Seth's murder of his brother eventually served to assign Osiris his rightful place as ruler of the dead.

[97] Velde, *Seth*, 99-108.

[98] Velde, *Seth*, 138.

[99] Velde, *Seth*, 148-151; the hymn is cited on 151.

[100] Velde, *Seth*, 116.

[101] Albert de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature*, Religions in the

an unprecedented way, this sharp divide between a god of good and the god of evil was applied to the rest of reality as well. The spiritual world was conceived of as consisting of two opposing camps: Ahreman was supported by the *daevas*, the old warrior gods now considered evil spiritual beings, while Ormuzd was assisted by a host of good divinities. In the animal world, certain animals (predominantly insects and reptiles) were said to be created by the evil spirit: killing these *khrafstra* was a sacred duty to the Zoroastrian faithful.[102] Naturally, humanity was divided into two camps as well. The Zoroastrian believers who followed the precepts of Ahura Mazdā would share in his final victory over the evil spirit. The evildoers and unbelievers, however, were to be destroyed in the final fire, along with their spiritual master. Interestingly, Zoroastrian texts also express great anxiety about groups of people who were said to worship the *daeva* in a more specific way. These 'Ahremanists' were described as secretly gathering at night in order to celebrate their own reverted liturgy and recite their own daevanic revelation. Furthermore, it was claimed by the Zoroastrian scribes that they liked to feast on putrefying human flesh and cover themselves in human excrement.[103]

How does this general background information regarding gods of misfortune and evil relate to the emergence of Satan as a mythological figure? At first glance, surprisingly, very little at most. The first historical instances of the designation 'satan' can be found in the collection of Hebrew writings that would later form the Jewish Tenach and the Christian Old Testament. It is commonly translated as 'accuser' or 'adversary'; related meanings as 'obstructer' and tester have been proposed as well.[104] In five places in the Tenach – the majority of cases – the word indicates human opponents; in four places, it is used for non-human actors. Thus in Numbers 22, 22-35, the *mal'ak Yahweh* (the Messenger or Angel of Yahweh) is called a 'satan' when he blocks the passage of Balaam on his way to curse the people of Israel. The word *satan* here simply means that the angel is a 'physical' obstructer standing in Balaak's way.
This *satan* is clearly a different personality from the *satan* appearing in a vision of the prophet Zechariah dealing with the disputed status of a Hebrew high priest (Zechariah 3, 1-2). In the vision, the high priest is pictured standing before the Angel of Yahweh, while *hássátan*, 'the accuser', is on his right side to accuse him. The Angel of Yawheh rebukes this accuser, however, and revindicates the priest's position. A similar role is fulfilled by the most well-known 'satan' in the Jewish Tenach, the one figuring in the prologue to the book of Job, which is commonly dated to the sixth century BCE. The first two chapters of this book describe how the 'sons of god' are gathered before Yawheh. Among them appears an angel who is, once again, simply indicated as 'the accuser'. When he reports that he has 'roamed throughout the earth, going back and forth on it', Yahweh asks him if he has noted the exceptional piety of his servant Job. The angel responds that this exceptional piety is not surprising, as Yahweh has made Job prosper in all ways. What will remain of Job's dedication if his wealth and health are taken away? Yahweh takes up the challenge and allows the angel to strike Job with misfortune and disease. The rest of the book is taken up with poetical dialogues on misfortune between Job, his friends, and Yahweh himself, who eventually restores Job to his former prosperity.
In the biblical passage from Job, there is an obvious connection between satan and misfortune. Yet the 'satan' that we find here, most modern scholarship agrees, is not a distinct mythological personality incorporating evil, but rather the job description of a heavenly functionary whose office it is to report on humankind and test its virtue.[105] The idea of a

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Graeco-Roman World, no. 133 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 312n.
[102] Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*, 338-347.
[103] Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*, 178-180.
[104] Breytenbach and Day, 'Satan,' 726; Kelly, *Satan*, 30; 'Satan,' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter 1972), 14:901-903.

universal opposing spiritual force that is responsible for misfortune is practically absent in the Hebrew Bible, which has as one of its central themes the status of Yahweh as the only true and genuinely powerful deity. Misfortune is attributed either to human infringements of Yahweh's prescriptions, or to the inscrutable divine will itself. This is the theme of many of the Psalms, and also, eventually, of the book of Job, which after the prologue is completely devoted to poetical disputations about the righteousness of the divine distribution of fortune and misfortune by Yahweh, while the accuser-angel is never mentioned again.

Some biblical scholars argue that the 'inner dynamics' of developing monotheisms like the Hebrew cult of Yahweh more or less inevitably created a certain 'externalisation of evil', in order to prevent a direct association between the deity and evil.[106] As an illustration of this tendency, a fourth Bible passage where satan appears is often mentioned, namely, 1 Chronicles 21, 1. 1 Chronicles is a later adaptation of the histories of the kings of Israel told in the second book of Samuel. 2 Samuel 24 recounts how Yahweh provoked King David to hold a census of Israel, despite the fact that this was considered a sinful action: as a consequence, Israel was stricken by a devastating plague. In 1 Chronicles 21, the same story is told, but here it is 'a satan' who 'provoked David to number Israel'. The remarkable introduction of a third party in this text is often interpreted as an attempt by the Hebrew chronicler to exculpate Yahweh from malevolent behaviour, thus signifying 'the beginnings of a moral dichotomy in the celestial sphere'.[107] This interpretation, however, is not undisputed. It has been suggested that the unknown author of 1 Chronicles might in fact be interested not so much in the ethics of divine action, but rather in giving a favourable picture of the relationship between Yahweh and David – especially since elsewhere in 2 Chronicles, Yahweh is unencumberedly depicted as sanctioning lies and harmful behaviour (cf. 2 Chronicles 10, 14 and 18, 18-22).[108]

Only in the period between the closure of the Jewish Tenach (approximately 400 BCE) and the destruction of the second Jerusalem Temple (70 CE) did spiritual enactors of misfortune and evil gain a certain prominence in Jewish religious thought. The historical causes of this development are subject to debate. Iranologists usually claim a strong influence from the radically dualistic concept of the spirit world in Iranian Zoroastrianism: after all, the Israelites had been taken away in captivity to Zoroastrian Persia, and later on could have become familiar with Zoroastrian ideas in the great cultural melting pot of Hellenistic Asia. Biblical scholars often emphasise autonomous theological developments within Judaism itself.[109] Whatever the causes, a growing preoccupation with spiritual workers of evil becomes apparent during this period, finding expression in new cosmogonical theories, lists of demons, and eschatological concepts (ideas about the end of the world). The satan of the Tenach is caught up in this process of theological dichotomization. It is impossible to pinpoint the exact moment when satan becomes Satan, the Evil One; but there are some significant hallmarks. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible dating from around 200 BCE, the references in Job and Zechariah to an angel-who-is-a-satan are translated with 'ho diabolos',

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[105] Kelly, *Satan*; Breytenbach and Day, 'Satan,' 727-728.

[106] Cf. Russell, *The Devil*, 57, and Gerd Theißen, 'Monotheismus und Teufelsglaube: Entshehung und Psychologie des biblischen Satansmythos,' in *Demons and the Devil in Ancient and Medieval Christianity*, ed. Nienke Vos and Willemien Otten. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae: Texts and Studies of Early Christian Life and Language, no. 108 (Leiden: Brill 2011), 37-69, especially 43, 50.

[107] Breytenbach and Day, 'Satan,' 730.

[108] Breytenbach and Day, 'Satan,' 729-730.

[109] Riley, 'Devil,' 245, and Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, 19, both propound the 'Iranian hypothesis'. Authors more skeptical about Iranian influence include: James Barr, 'The Question of Religious Influence: The Case of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity,' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53 (June 1985), 2:201-235; Kelly, *Satan*, 5, 31; P. de Menasce O.P., 'Note sur le dualisme mazdéen,' *Satan: Les Études Carmélitaines* 27 (1948): 130-135; Theißen, 'Monotheismus und Teufelsglaube,' 49-50. For a more general discussion of the influence of Zoroastrianism on Judaism and Christianity, see Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrianism: A Shadowy but Powerful Presence in the Judaeo-Christian World* (London: Dr William's Trust, 1987).

'the Slanderer', thus marking him both as a distinct personality and as a distinctly more unpleasant one.[110] Even now, however, it is not yet clear-cut that this 'Slanderer' will eventually become the unchallenged lord of evil. The religious literature of contemporary Judaism mentions a great deal of competing candidates: rulers of wicked spirits with exotic names like Semyaza, Azazel, Semihazah, Asmodeus (probably a derivation from the Iranian *aesma-daeva*, 'god of wrath'), Belial or Beliar, Mastemah, Samael, Melkina.[111]

After the destruction of the Second Temple, dominant currents within Judaism downplayed the importance of these spiritual actors, emphasizing instead the dual inclination towards good and evil within man himself.[112] The emphasis on evil spirits and eschatology was retained and elaborated, however, by Jewish religious groups outside mainstream Judaism.[113] One of these groups had sprung into being around an executed Jewish preacher called Jesus of Nazareth and was destined to play a prominent role in world history. In the selection of writings this new religious movement added to the Jewish canon (known today as the 'New Testament'), Satan/the devil makes a regular appearance, while many stories tell about dramatic encounters with demons, a designation that had obtained an exclusively negative connotation in the Judeo-Christian tradition.[114] As a whole, the New Testament writings presuppose an evil kingdom of darkness opposing the kingdom of light of the true god; and in most cases, Satan is pictured as the master of the former. At the moment the New Testament authors write, earth is still dominated by these demonic forces, which bring misfortune, sickness, and temptation to sin. Jesus, however, has come to proclaim the coming victory of the kingdom of Yahweh over that of Satan, whose eventual removal from power is pictured in glowing colours in the last addition to the Christian canon, the Book of Revelation.[115]

Despite this greater prominence, the portrait of Satan in the New Testament remains sketchy. Older and other traditions are occasionally visible through the seams of the texts. Thus, in the synoptic Evangels (the biographical accounts of Jesus attributed to Mark, Matthew, and Luke) the Hebrew word 'satan' is sometimes still used in its older, broader significance; for instance, at the point where the apostle Peter tries to prevent Jesus from accepting his Job-like fate of suffering and is rebuked by the latter as a 'satan' (Matthew 16, 23; Marc 8, 33). The synoptic Gospels occasionally also refer to the ruler of evil or unclean spirits as Baalzebul, the 'Great Lord' worshipped in Phoenician religion, while the apostle Paul juxtaposes Christ with Belial – and not Satan – in his second pastoral letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 6, 14-15). Yet in most New Testament contexts the word 'Satan', untranslated from the Hebrew, or its Greek equivalent 'devil', has clearly come to designate a distinct spiritual being that is 'wholly the enemy of God and righteousness'.[116]

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[110] Riley, 'Devil,' 244. Kelly, *Satan*, 31, even writes: 'we have thus witnessed the Birth of Satan.'

[111] Riley, 'Devil,' 246; Russell, *The Devil*, 189; Victor P. Hamilton, 'Satan,' in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, (New York: Double Day, 1992), 5:985-989; B. Janowski, 'Azazel,' in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 128-130; S. D. Sperlinger, 'Belial,' in ibidem, 169-171.

[112] See, among others, the entry 'Satan,' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

[113] For a discussion of dualistic tendencies and references to demons with the Jewish group whose writings were recovered at Qumran, see Michael Mach, 'Demons,' in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1:189-192, and Jean Duhaime, 'Dualism,' ibidem, 1:215-220.

[114] Cf. Riley, 'Demon'. The negative Judeo-Christian attitude towards the *daemones* may be an intensification of an already existing trend in the Greco-Roman world; See Russell, *The Devil*, 142, and Algra, 'Stoics on Souls and Demons'.

[115] Riley, 'Devil,' 247-249, and Geert van Oyen, 'Demons and Exorcism in the Gospel of Mark,' in *Demons and the Devil in Ancient and Medieval Christianity*, ed. Nienke Vos and Willemien Otten. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae: Texts and Studies of Early Christian Life and Language, no. 108 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 99-116.

[116] Riley, 'Devil,' 247.

The sketchy outlines in the New Testament were worked into a coherent topography of evil in the Christian theology of the second and third centuries. Authors like Justin Martyr (100-165), Tertullian (160-225), and Origen of Alexandria (185–254) pioneered the emergence of a systematic Christian theology modelled on the example of Classic philosophy.[117] They also extended their venture into the domains of darkness, listing and classifying the hosts of evil spirits in the pages of their treatises. In their writings, Satan is firmly established as the prince of the enemy realm. His activities are also read backwards into the Jewish scriptures of the Tenach, identifying him, for instance, with the Serpent who seduced Adam and Eve into original sin in the book of Genesis – an identification that had already been suggested in the New Testament Book of Revelation, where Satan is called 'the Serpent of old' (Rev. 12, 9).[118] Justin, Origen, and other early theologians also tried to fill in the gaps in the devil's biography that had been left open by the canonical scriptures, particularly those regarding his origin (and thus, ultimately, the origin of evil). In doing this, they elaborated on earlier speculations and mythical accounts recorded in Jewish and Christian writings that eventually were not admitted into the Biblical canon. One of these mythical accounts was that of the Watcher Angels. In the biblical book of Genesis, a remarkable passage told how the 'sons of God' had observed the beauty of the 'daughters of men' and 'took wives for themselves' from among them. 'There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them.' (Genesis 6, 1-4) In the first book of Enoch (an apocryphal book dating from approximately 300 BC to 100 CE), this story was expanded in a myth about a class of angels who had found pleasure in mortal women and had been banished from heaven as a punishment for this cosmic downdating. On earth, they had introduced gold, weapons, and women's cosmetics: in other words, most of the sins of civilization.[119] Although the leader of the fallen angels is called Semyaza in 1 Enoch, 6-16, this myth was later applied to Satan, whose first transgression thus would have been inappropriate lust.

Yet another story identified Satan's original sin with envy. When man was created, this story maintained, the angel was not able to accept that Yahweh had selected such a lowly creature to be made into the divine image. As a consequence, he choose to revolt against his maker. This account continued to be upheld by some, particularly within Eastern Christianity, and was later also adopted by Islamic theology.[120] The explanation that would eventually become dominant in Western Christianity, however, attributed Satan's earlier downfall to pride. This myth of origin was inspired by a prophecy in the biblical book of Isaiah, where it was said about the king of Babel that he sought to set himself up as an equal to 'the Most High'; but instead of succeeding in his effort, he was humbled by Yahweh (Isaiah 14,12). From the first century CE, this oracle about the 'morning star' ('Lucifer', in Latin) was associated with the devil. Satan's fall thus occurred before creation: being the foremost among the angels, he wanted to be god himself and took up the banner of rebellion, subsequently leading mankind into sin in the guise of the Serpent of Eden.[121]

From these embryonic beginnings, by the third or fourth century CE, something resembling an official biography of Satan had come into being. Certainly, enough problems and loose ends remained to keep Christian theologians busy for many centuries to come. Origen, for

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[117] Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*. The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, vol. 6 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 135-17.

[118] Kelly, *Satan*, 177, 191-195.

[119] Elaine Pagels, 'The Social History of Satan, the 'Intimate Enemy': A Preliminary Sketch,' *Harvard Theological Review* 84 (1991) 2:105-128; there 117.

[120] M.J. Kister, 'Ādam: A Study of Some Legends in *Tafsīr* and *Hadīt* Literature,' *Israel Oriental Studies* 13 (1993): 113-174.

[121] Riley, 'Devil,' 246-247.

instance, still maintained that Satan would be reintegrated into creation after the final judgement as part of the 'άποκατάστασις πάντων', the 'recuperation of all things'.[122] But the general contours of the Christian Satan were by now reasonably well-defined. He was the arch-enemy, ruling a kingdom of darkness that opposed the kingdom of Christ, and heading a retinue of demons and evil spirits that mirrored the angelic hierarchy of heaven. Because of his rebellion against divine rule and his involvement in the fall of mankind, he was closely associated with the genesis and introduction of evil itself. Although he could only operate within the limits that were set for him by divine will, and although his empire would be broken in the end, as 'god of this world' (John 14, 30 and 16, 11; cf. also I John 5, 19), Satan's power in present reality was formidable. From a vaguely defined heavenly functionary with a slightly unpleasant job description, Satan had transformed into the principal mythological representative of evil.

constructing worshippers of Satan

The Christian message did not stop at discerning a strong malevolent presence in the world. It also professed to be able to remedy this situation. Christianity promised to liberate its adherents – and eventually the entire universe – from the demons that brought misfortune, disease, deception, and general evil. Jesus himself was described in the Gospels as a powerful exorcist casting out demons from the possessed and the sick.[123] In his name, his followers claimed the same power. Thus the long lists of evil spirits in theological tracts were not just frivolous speculation about inimical transcendental worlds, but a practical tool to control spiritual forces that were manifest in day-to-day reality.[124]

In their efforts to control evil spirits, the early Christians were just one group among the many rival religious specialists pertaining to do the same. What made them stand out was both the universal scope and the exclusivist character of their claims. Every person, regardless of ethnicity, social class, or gender, could become a Christian; or rather, *should* become a Christian, because only Christ could bring true deliverance from evil. At the other side of the mirror, as we have seen, the malevolent beings that made mankind miserable were also considered to belong to one, universal antagonistic force. Whereas local specialists could offer limited succour against local malign entities, Christianity claimed to award immunity against both these local demons and the greater evil behind them all. A message like this could not fail to have appeal in the increasingly globalizing society of the Roman Empire.[125]

This totalising discourse and its accompanying dichotomization were applied to Christianity's religious rivals as well. As the new religious movement evolved from being a Jewish sect to being a truly universal religion, its confrontation with the paganism that dominated the Roman Empire became increasingly fierce. In his first letter to the church at Corinth, the apostle Paul already displayed an intriguing ambiguity towards the deities of paganism, calling them empty idols in the tradition of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, yet also suggesting the presence of sinister spiritual entities behind them (1 Corinthians 10, 20a – but see also 1 Corinthian 8, 4-6). *Demons*, real supernatural powers, were the instigators and the moving force behind the worship of the pagan idols and the prodigies of the pagan religions. 'These unclean spirits, or demons, as revealed to Magi and philosophers, find a lurking place under statues and consecrated images, and by their breath exercise influence as of a present god,' the Christian apologist Minucius Felix wrote towards the end of the second century, 'At one they inspire prophets, at another haunt temples, at another animate the fibres of entrails,

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[122] Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 151; Theißen, 'Monotheismus und Teufelsglaube,' 57.
[123] Oyen, 'Demons and Exorcism in the Gospel of Mark'.
[124] Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 21-24.
[125] Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 7, 13-37.

govern the flight of birds, determine lots, and are the authors of oracles mostly wrapped in falsehood.'[126] For Justin Martyr, even the traits in heathen religions that seemed to parallel elements of Christianity were conscious creations of demons, forged with foresight 'to produce in men the idea that the things which were said with regard to Christ were mere marvellous tales, like the things which were said by the poets'.[127] For the growing numbers of heathen converts to Christianity, the pagan gods did not all of a sudden become unreal. Rather, they were *reinterpreted*: they received a new place in the order of reality. 'Those whom you had presumed to be gods, you learn to be demons,' Tertullian wrote succinctly in his *Apologeticus*.[128] From the second century on, converts to Christianity invariably had to be exorcized before they could be baptized, solemnly abjuring 'Satan and all his pomp and circumstance'.[129]

The religious propaganda battle that went on was not fought with words and theological treatises alone. By spectacular feats of exorcism, the gods were forced to denounce themselves. To quote Minucius Felix once again:

> All of this, as most of your people know, the demons themselves admit to be true, when they are driven out of men's bodies by words of exorcism and the fire of prayer. Saturn himself, Serapis, Jupiter, or any other demon you worship, under stress of pain, confess openly what they are; and surely they would not lie to their own disgrace, particularly with some of you standing by. When the witnesses themselves confess the truth about themselves, that they are demons, you cannot but believe; when adjured in the name of the one true God, reluctantly, in misery, they quail and quake, and either suddenly leap forth at once, or vanish gradually, according to the faith exercised by the sufferer or the grace imparted by the healer.[130]

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[126] Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, xxvii.1, English translation by G. Rendall and W. Kerr in Tertullian, *Apology. De Spectaculis*, ed. T. R. Glover. Loeb Classical Library, no. 250 (1933; Reprint, London: William Heinemann, 1960), 397. Significantly, the Vulgate, following the Septuagint, translated Psalm 95, 5 as 'Omnes dii gentium daemones': 'All the gods of the nation are demons'.

[127] Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, liv; English translation by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* (1885; reprint, Peabody, Ma.: Hendrickson, 1994), vol. 1. For Justin's attitude toward demons, see Theodoor Korteweg, 'Justin Martyr and his Demon-ridden Universe,' in *Demons and the Devil in Ancient and Medieval Christianity*, ed. Nienke Vos and Willemien Otten. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae: Texts and Studies of Early Christian Life and Language, no. 108 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 145-158.

[128] Tertullian, *Apology*, xxiii.11; English translation by T. R. Glover in Tertullian, *Apology. De Spectaculis*, 127.

[129] Cf. Arnold Angenendt, 'Die Liturgie und die Organisation des Kirchlichen Lebens auf dem Lande,' in *Cristianizzazione ed organizzazione ecclesiastica delle campagne nell'alto medioevo: espansione e resistenze* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1982), 1:169-226. The reference to 'satanae et omnibus operibus ejus' is still preserved in the baptismal rite of many Western Christian denominations, for instance that of the Roman Catholic Church – see the 'Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum' and the 'Ordo baptismi parvulorum' from the *Rituale Romanum*, consulted by me in *Rituale Romanum Pauli V Pontificus Maximi jussu editum, aliorumque pontificum cura recognitum atque auctoritate ssmi. d. n. Pii Papæ XI ad norman codicis juris canonici accommodatum* (Ratisbonæ: Friderici Pustet, 1925), 38, 45.

[130] Felix, *Octavius* xxvii.5-7; English translation by G. Rendall and W. Kerr in Tertullian, *Apology. De Spectaculis*, 399. See also Tertullian's challenging reference to the Christian exorcism of the gods in his *Apologeticum*: 'Produce someone before your tribunals, who is admittedly demon-possessed. Let any Christian you please bid him speak, and the spirit in the man will own himself a demon – and truly – just as he will elsewhere call himself a god, falsely. Similarly bring forward some one or other of those persons who are supposed to be god-possessed, who by sniffing at altars inhale a divine power in the smell, who cure themselves by belching, who declaim panting. Let us take your Great Virgin of Heaven herself, promiser of rain, your great Aesculapius, discoverer of medical arts, giver of life to Socordius, Thanatius, Asclepiodotus (who will die some other day all the same) – if they do not confess they are demons, not daring to lie to a Christian, then shed the impudent Christian's blood on the spot!' Tertullian, *Apology. De Spectaculis*, 125 [*Apology*, xxiii.4-6]. A reference from the fifth century can be found in Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (London: Sussex University Press, 1975), 67.

The Antique Christian view of the gods as evil spirits, malign yet real, became stock-in-trade with the Patristic writers and was carried on into the Middle Ages and beyond.[131] In the accounts of missionary saints, demons frequently make their appearance when pagan temples and shrines are destroyed or turned into Christian places of worship, mostly in the shape of 'black Ethiopians'.[132] The polytheistic and panentheistic character of the pagan religions had sprinkled the European landscape with spiritual hot spots, and the Christian conquest of the continent was as much a conquest of *objects* and *places* as of men and minds. Hallowed trees had to be felled; sacred sources and lakes exorcized. In the rigid dualistic scheme that dominated Christianity during long periods of its existence, neutral zones all but ceased to exist: buildings, gardens, tools, animals, even the bread used in the Eucharist and the water sprinkled in baptism, all had to be freed from demonic presences using officially prescribed rituals. This attitude to reality is well illustrated by the well-known story told by Gregorius the Great about a nun who ate a piece of lettuce but forgot to make the sign of the cross. A demon promptly took possession of her and the nun had to be exorcised before the hostile invader hidden in the leaf of lettuce evacuated her body again.[133]
Incidentally, the demonising of the pagan gods and of their worship as worship of the devil also reflected on the popular conception of Satan. The well-known image of the devil as goat-footed and horned is reminiscent of the Greek god Pan and of the *fauni* and *silvani* of the Roman forests.[134] In other places, the devil sometimes assimilated traits of native gods. In the late medieval Dutch miracle play *Mariken van Nieumegen*, for instance, he appears as 'One-Eyed Moenen' ('Moenen metter eender ooghe'), quaintly resembling the Nordic god Wotan whose worship had already been abandoned for centuries.[135]

Demon-inspired as the worship of the pagans might have been according to the classic *interpretatio Christiana*, the pagans were not thought of as *intentionally* worshipping the devil. It was not suggested that they were aware of the true identity of their gods and persisted in venerating them nevertheless. They were simply misguided.[136] The concept that a group of

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[131] Cf. Augustine of Hippo's *City of God*, viii, 24, and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II, ii, 94. The Patristic view of other gods as demons was also prominent in the confrontation of Western Christianity with the non-Western world in the colonial era, and in some measure up to this day. For some illustrative situations from Spanish America, see Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 5-39, and Iris Gareis, 'Wie Engel und Teufel in die Neue welt kamen. Imaginationen von Gut und Böse in kolonialen Amerika,' *Paideuma: Mitteilungen ur Kulturkunde* 45 (1999): 257-273.

[132] Kelly, *Satan*, 217, 226-227. For other examples, see the episode with the statue of Apollo when Benedictus establishes Monte Casino, and St. Gall's struggle with the demon of a Swiss lake, both quoted in Edward Peters (ed.), *Monks, Bishops and Pagans: Christian Culture in Gaul and Italy, 500-700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), 64, 115-116; see also Nienke Vos, 'The Saint as Icon: Transformation of Biblical Imagery in Early Medieval Hagiography,' in *Iconoclasm and Iconoclash: Struggle for Religious Identity*, ed. Willem van Asselt, Paul van Geest, and others (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 201-216.

[133] The story of the nun and the lettuce was reported by Gregorius the Great in his *Dialogues*, I, 4.7; paraphrases can be found in Angenendt, 'Liturgie und Organisation des Kirchlichen Lebens,' 189-190, and Alain Boureau, *Satan the Heretic: The Birth of Demonology in the Medieval West*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 94.

[134] Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (London: Sussex University Press, 1975), 234; according to Françoise Lavocat, 'L'Arcadie diabolique: La fiction poétique dans le débat sur la sorcellerie (XVIe-XVIIe siècles),' in *Fictions du Diable: Démonologie et littérature de saint Augustin à Léo Taxil*, ed. Françoise Lavocat, Pierre Kapitaniak, and Marianne Closson (Genève: Librairie Droz, 2007), 57-84, there 62-67, Augustine of Hippo was the first author to identify Pan and the satyrs with incubi and succubi.

[135] *Mariken van Nieumegen: Ingeleid en toegelicht door Dirk Coigneau* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 71, line 212; see also pp. 67 and 153.

[136] Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials. Their foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300-1500* (Berkeley, University of California Press 1976), 39.

people might *intentionally* be worshipping Satan or a demon – in other words, the concept of Satanism – first gained prominence in connection with enemies from within the Christian faith's own ranks: Jews who refused to recognize Jesus as Christ, and Christians whose beliefs or practices did not accord with one's own. The latter group was often designated as heretics – from the Greek word αἵρεσις, which originally meant 'choice'. In associating these groups with antagonistic spiritual forces, Christianity continued a trend that had already been visible within certain segments of intertestamentary Judaism. The Essenes, in particular, had enthusiastically applied the label of the Enemy to rival Jewish factions, and not so much to the 'Gentiles', who were only of limited concern to them, given the ethnicity-based character of Judaism.[137] This tradition of specifically ascribing a special bond with Satan to 'brethern' rather than external enemies was taken up by the nascent religion of Christianity. Already in the New Testament, Jews who do not convert and 'false' teachers from within the church are frequently designated as allies of Satan. 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do,' Jesus retorts to his Jewish opponents in the Gospel according to John, while a pastoral letter attributed to Paul calls heretical teachers a 'snare of the Devil, held captive to his will' (John 8, 44a; 2 Tim 2, 26). The theme is echoed in early patristic literature: Polycarp (†165) calls the orthodox believers 'the community of the first born of God', while adherents of Christianity with divergent religious views are identified as 'the first born children of Satan'. The Shepherd of Hermas adds the image of two cities; one is the community of those serving the god of Christianity, the other the community of those serving Satan.[138]

These polemic categorizations of a general nature eventually evolved into specific allegations of intentional, deliberate veneration of Satan. From inhabitant of the city of Satan because of his dangerous distortion of Christian doctrine, the heretic gradually came to be conceived of as an active idolater of the devil. Early in the eight century, the Catholicus of Armenia John of Ojun attributed such a practise to the Paulicians, a dissenting Christian group that had emerged in the Near East. According to John of Ojun's account in his 720th sermon, the Paulicians gathered at night to worship the devil. They also practised idolatry, incest, and infanticide, mixed the host with the blood of slaughtered children, and left the bodies of their dead in the open air to decompose.[139] In western Christianity, the first report of this kind, as far as scholarship is aware, dates from 1022, when two clerics called Stephanus and Lisoius were tried for heresy by a synod at Toulouse, in the south of France. The transactions of the synod described the practices of these alleged sectarians and their adherents in lurid detail:

> They are said to have convened on certain nights in a house agreed upon beforehand, holding a single lamp in their hand, and declaiming the name of the demon like in a litany, until suddenly the Demon could be seen descending among them in the likeness of some kind of animal. As soon as possible everyone who was able, seized the woman next to him to abuse her, without having any regard in their sins for mother or sister or nun. Such a coition they held for holy & religious: as for the children generated by this defiled coition, on the eight day they make a huge fire in their midst and then try them in the manner of the ancient Pagans, and thus burn them in the fire. Their ashes they collected and preserved with such veneration as Christian piety uses to do with the body of Christ, given to those who leave this sorrowful time for their journey. The diabolical fraud then entered these ashes with such force, that

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[137] Pagels, 'The Social History of Satan,' 127. In this article, and her later monograph, *The Origin of Satan* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1996), Elaine Pagels makes the intriguing suggestion that the concept of Satan *itself* owed its flourishing in Judeo-Christian religion to this application to the 'intimate enemies' within the own creedal community.

[138] Russell, *Prince of Darkness*, 55.

[139] I owe the reference to the Paulicians to Carlo Ginzberg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1990), 75.

> whoever has been imbued with the aforementioned sect & has tasted and taken even a little from these ashes, will afterwards hardly be able to ever direct the steps of his mind from that sect to the road of truth.Enough has been said of things like these in order that the children of Christ may beware of such nefarious works and not start to imitate the things they study.[140]

Were gruesome Satanist orgies like these really taking place among the Paulicians and in medieval France? Modern historians give ample reasons to answer this question negatively. For one thing, many of the picturesque details provided by reports like these were not altogether novel. Most of them could be read in the Fathers of the Church and other early authors, in the sections of their work where they recounted Roman allegations against, ironically, the early Christian themselves. This, for instance, is how a pagan Roman describes the Christian assemblies in Minicius Felix:

> They recognize one another by secret signs and marks; they fall in love almost before they are acquainted; everywhere they introduce a kind of religion of lust, a promiscuous 'brotherhood' and 'sisterhood' by which ordinary fornication, under cover of a hallowed name, is converted to incest. And thus their vain and foolish superstition makes an actual boast of crime. For themselves, were there not some foundation of truth, shrewd rumour would not impute gross and unmentionable forms of vice. I am told that under some idiotic impulse they consecrate and worship the head of an ass, the meanest of all beasts, a religion worthy of the morals which gave it birth. Others say that they actually reverence the private parts of their director and high-priest, and adore his organs as parent of their being. This may be false, but such suspicions naturally attach to their secret and nocturnal rites. To say that a malefactor put to death for his crimes, and wood of the death-dealing cross, are objects of their veneration is to assign fitting altars to abandoned wretches and the kind of worship they deserve. Details of the initiation of neophytes are as revolting as they are notorious. An infant, cased in dough to deceive the unsuspecting, is placed beside the person to be initiated. The novice is thereupon induced to inflict what seem to be harmless blows upon the dough, and unintentionally the infant is killed by his unsuspecting blows; the blood – oh, horrible – they lap up greedily; the limbs they tear to pieces eagerly; and over the victim they make league and covenant, and by complicity in guilt pledge themselves to mutual silence. Such sacred rites are more foul than sacrilege. Their form of feasting is notorious; it is in everyone's mouth, as testified by the speech of our friend Cirta. On the day appointed they gather at a banquet with all their children, sisters, and mothers, people either sex and every age. There, after full feasting, when the blood is heated and drink has inflamed the passions of incestuous lust, a dog which had been tied to a lamp is tempted by a morsel thrown

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[140] 'Congregabantur siquidem certis noctibus in domo denominata, singuli lucernas tenentes in manibus, ad instar letaniæ dæmonum nomina declamabat, donec subito Dæmonem in similitudine cujuslibet bestiolæ inter eos viderent descenderibus, quamprimum quisque poterat, mulierem, quæ ad manum sibi veniebat, ad abutendum arripiebat; sine peccati respectu, & utrum mater, aut soror, aut Monacha haberetur, pro sanctitate & religione ejus concubitus ab illis æstimabatur: ex quo spurcissimo concibutu infans (a) generatus, octava die in medio eorum copioso igne accenso probabatur per ignem more antiquorum Paganorum, & sic in igne cremabatur. Cujus cinis tante veneratione colligebatur, atque custodiebatur; ut Christiana religiositas corpus Christi custodire solet, ægris dandum de hoc sæculo exituris ad viaticum. Inerat enim tanta vis diabolicæ fraudis in ipso cinere, ut quicumque de præfata hæresi imbutus fuisset, & de eodem cinere quamvis sumendo parum prælibavisset, vix unquam postea de eadem hæresi gressum mentis ad viam veritatis dirigere valeret. De qua re parum dixisse sufficiat, ut Christicolæ caveant se ab hoc nefario opere, non ut studeant sectando imitari.' Gesta Synodi Aurelianensis an. MXXII, adversus novus Manicheos, in: Bénédictins de la Congrégation de S. Maur (eds.), *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France* X (Paris, Chez Gabriel Martin, H.L. Guerin & L.F. Delatour, Antoine Boudet 1760), 536-539; 538. See also M. Guérard, *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de St.-Père de Chartres*. Collection des Cartulaires de France, no. 1 (Paris: Imprimerie de Crapelet, 1840), 1:108-115 and 1:cciv-ccvi. A German translation of the text can be found in Zacharias, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe*, 49-50.

> beyond the range of his tether to bound forward with a rush. The tale-telling light is upset and extinguished, and in the shameless dark lustful embraces are indiscriminately exchanged; and all alike, if not in act, yet by complicity, are involved in incest, as anything that occurs by the act of individuals results from the common intention.[141]

Needless to say, these libels against early Christians had no foundation in fact. They reflected earlier rumours that had circulated in the Roman Empire with regard to 'outsider groups' such as the Jews, foreign mystery cults, and 'barbarians' living outside the border.[142] For pagan Romans, the Christians must have represented an extreme embodiment of such an outsider group that completely reversed traditional values of citizenship and piety. Secretly convening in sinister places like catacombs, the new religious movement worshipped an executed rebel as a god, instead of the divine emperor; and its adherents added insult to absurdity by claiming all other gods were in reality evil demons.

Christian writers did not shrink from reapplying bogey stories like this to their own opponents.[143] Sometimes these imputations were directed against pagan cults, but in most cases, rival factions of Christianity functioned as targets.[144] Justin Martyr already attributes similar practices to 'heretics called Christians', although he cautiously adds 'whether they perpetrate those fabulous and shameful deeds – the upsetting of the lamp, and promiscuous intercourse, and eating human flesh – we know not'.[145] In his writings against the Manicheans, Augustine of Hippo follows a similar strategy of subtle insinuation. Reporting allegations that the followers of Mani participated in indiscriminate orgies where male sperm was offered to the deity and consumed as Eucharist, he admits these rumours might not be true, but nevertheless maintains that they were provoked by the Manichean doctrines themselves, whose logical application would indeed lead to practices like these.[146] Other writers, however, omitted these *caveats*. In the *Panarion*, a fourth-century Greek catalogue of heresies, Epiphanius of Salamis describes a Christian group that he simply designates as 'Gnostics'. Similar to Roman descriptions of early Christians, they were said to recognize each other by secret hand signs and engage in group sex, presenting their semen as an offering like Augustine's Manichees and subsequently eating it; the same procedure was applied to menstrual fluids. When a woman inadvertently became pregnant during these sacred orgies, they aborted the foetus and feasted on it in a communal meal.[147]

Again, historians have debated whether some religious groups in this period (particularly Gnostic ones) may indeed have performed (some of) these practices.[148] There is, after all,

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[141] Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, ix.2-7, quoted in Tertullian, *Apology. De Spectaculis*, 337-339. See also Tertullian's sarcastic refutation of these accusations in his *Apology*; Tertullian, *Apology. De Spectaculis*, 10-11, 36-38, 42-47 [*Apology*, II.5, VII.1-5, VIII].

[142] Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 107-128.

[143] Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 1-17, 56, covers the background of the pagan accusations and their Christian reapplication in some depth. Already in 1760, the Benedictines who edited the *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France* noticed these great resemblances, remarking in a footnote: 'Hæc narratio, & calumniæ quibus appebantur primi Christiani, quamdam similitudinem inter se habent. Imitando numquid unum ad altero expressum?' Bénédictins de la Congrégation de S. Maur (eds.), *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules* X, 538n.

[144] Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 107.

[145] Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, xxvi. (transl. Roberts-Donaldson) The passage refers to the followers of Simon Magus, probably a Gnostic group.

[146] Augustine of Hippo, *On the Morals of the Manichæans* and *Concerning the nature of good, against the Manichæans*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Phillip Schaff, transl. Richard Stothert and Albert H. Newman (Edingburgh: T&T Clark, 1887), first series, 4:86-89, 4:364.

[147] Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Panarion: Book I (Sects 1-46)*, trans. Frank Williams. Nag Hammadi Studies, no. 35 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), 85-86 [26, 4, 2- 5, 7].

[148] Frank Williams in his introduction to Epiphanius of Salamis' *Panarion*, xxi, considers the idea that all Gnostics were 'sexual libertines,' a 'judgement of unlikely accuracy', but does not exclude the possibility that there may be some kernel of truth in Epiphanius' description: 'In all probability libertine Gnostics were a

nothing inherently impossible in the activities described. Infanticide, cannibalism, and the ritual exchange of sexual partners all are frequently reported forms of human behaviour. Marriage between close kin was considered sacred by some religions (among which ancient Zoroastrianism), and rites utilizing sexual emissions are well-attested from both tribal religions and twentieth-century magical practice.[149] While it is not our concern at the moment whether some Christian groups may have performed some of these actions, it must be pointed out that the way these allegations fit into the pattern of prior and subsequent stereotypes should make every historian extremely wary of unhesitatingly accepting their veracity. Our only clues to their occurrence, moreover, come from polemic literature written by religious opponents of the groups concerned.

Meanwhile, it is important to note that one crucial element seems to be conspicuously lacking from the polemics of the Antique Christian authors: that of the intentional veneration of Satan. I am not aware of one author from this period who accuses heretical groups of consciously and deliberately venerating the devil or the demons. Epiphanius of Salamis, whose extensive work on heresies is nevertheless not sparing of diabolising labels and general terms of abuse, refrains from mentioning explicit devil worship among the many evils he detects among heretical groups – even in cases which may have particularly invited this, such as certain currents of Gnosticism that were involved in forms of extreme anti-exegesis. The Ophite Gnostics, for instance, held that the serpent of Paradise was a divine messenger and worshipped actual snakes as its representatives; in a similar vein, the Cainites held that Cain, and other figures vilified in the Tenach like the Sodomites and Esau, should in reality be held in esteem because of their opposition to the evil demiurge who inspired the Jewish scriptures.[150] In neither of these cases, nor in regard to most other heresies he describes, does Epiphanius speak of direct worship of the devil. The only time that he *does* mention a group that explicitly venerates Satan, it is lumped together with a group of religious movements he describes as 'altogether pagan'. The section Epiphanius devotes to these enigmatic 'Satanians' (Σατανιανοί) is surprisingly short, and largely devoid of picturesque detail:

> But others in their turn thought of something still more crafty and said, as though consulting their own intelligence in their simplicity, 'Satan is great and the strongest, and does people a great deal of harm. Why not take refuge in him, worship him instead [of God], and give him honour and blessing, so that he will be appeased by our flattering service and do us no harm, but spare us because we have become his servants? And so, again, they have called themselves Satanians.[151]

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minority.' Stephen Benko, 'The Libertine Gnostic Sect of the Phibionites According to Epiphanus,' *Vigilæ Christianæ* 21 (1967): 103-119, there 114, is also inclined to put faith in these rumors, while Christoph Markschies, *Die Gnosis* (München: Beck, 2001), 110-112, remains sceptical.

[149] Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*, 424-432; Bruce M. Knauft, 'Bodily Images in Melanesia: Cultural Substances and Natural Metaphors,' in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* , ed. Michel Feher (New York: Urzone 1989) 3:198-279; Hugh B. Urban, 'Magia Sexualis: Sex, Secrecy, and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism,' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72 (September 2004) 3:695-731.

[150] On the Ophites, see Jean-Daniel Kaestli, 'L'interprétation du serpent de Genèse 3 dans quelques textes gnostiques et la question de la gnose 'Ophite',' in *Gnosticisme et monde hellénistique: actes du colloque de Louvain-la-Neuve (11-14 mars 1980)*, ed. Julien Ries. Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, no. 27 *(*Louvain: Université Catholique de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, 1982), 116-130.

[151] Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Panarion: Book II and III (Sects 47-80, De Fide)*, trans. Frank Williams. Nag Hammadi Studies, no. 36 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 630-631 [80, 3, 1]. The Greek text uses the designation 'Σατανιανοί' for these people (Epiphanius of Salamis, *S.P.N. Epiphanii, Constantiae in Cypro episcope, opera quae repriri potuera omnia*, 3 vols. Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Patrologiae Graecae no. 41-43 (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1863), 1:164), with the variant 'Σατανιανους' later on (ibidem, 2:760). Frank Williams translated this as 'Satanists' in *Panarion: Book I*, 5 [Proem I, 4,8], and as 'Satanians' in the sections quoted. The Latin translation in the Patrologiae Graecae shows a similar confusion, using 'Satanici' in the Proem (Epiphanius of Salamis, *Epiphanii opera omnia*, 1:163) and 'Satanianos' in Epiphinaus' description in Book III (ibidem, 2:759).

This is, as far as I know, the first time a religious group practising Satanism is mentioned in a historical source. Epiphanius goes on to recount that they meet in the open air 'and spend their time in prayer and hymns'.[152] Although the group features as the last or penultimate 'sect' in his work, they hardly impress as the climax of deviance that their position in the book or their doctrine suggests they might be. Indeed, Epiphanius himself considers them 'harmless' and unable to distract anybody from the Christian faith.[153]
As the bishop's work is our only source for these 'Satanians', we cannot say much for or against their actual existence.[154] It might well be that some misunderstood doctrine of a peripatic religious group is at the root of his story – Epiphanius is not exactly an author who is known for the trustworthiness of his utterances. On the other hand, at the end of the fourth century, when Epiphanius wrote his book, the concept of the Judeo-Christian Satan might have been sufficiently widespread to inspire non-Christians to seek his assistance or protection. At any rate, it is clear from the *Panarion* that the Satanians – if they ever existed – were in all respects an extremely marginal group. In addition, none of the classic features of the stereotype for the (religious) 'other' – cannibalism, infanticide, indiscriminate sex, secretive, nightly gatherings – are attributed to them by Epiphanius. Although their appearance in the *Panarion* shows that the idea or occurrence of people worshipping Satan was not inconceivable to Antique Christian authors, they apparently did not yet choose to include this feature in their descriptions of inner-faith dissidence.

The Middle Ages inaugurated a drastic change regarding the latter point. We have seen how authors from this period picked up the late-Antique anti-heretical discourse – it is highly suggestive in this connection, for instance, that the 'sect' around Stephanus and Lisoius is designated as *novos Manicheos* – 'New Manicheans' – right away. Yet the medieval polemicists also elaborated and modified the discourse they had inherited. Gradually, new elements were added to the traditional matrix of vilification, such as parodies of the eucharist, abuse of the host or crucifix, and the element that interests us here: veneration of Satan or demons. The resulting 'Satanist' stereotype was applied to a wide array of dissenting groups throughout the Middle Ages. The seventh-century Paulicians, the Bogomils, the Cathars, the radical ascetic Fratecelli, the Waldensians, the Hussites; all of these were systematically or incidentally accused of worshipping the devil.[155] In many cases, this crust of attribution grew so thick that it has become all but impossible to establish the exact identity of the groups concerned, especially as most of the sources left to us were authored by their 'orthodox' opponents. Even the names by which we call them have mostly flown from the pen of Catholic chroniclers.[156] Wherever we are able to get some glimpses of the real practices and convictions of these groups, however, they invariably turn out to be far removed from Satanism of any kind. The Cathars, or at least some of them, were adherents to a more dualistic variant of Christianity, as were the Bogomils – neither was likely to be involved in

[152] Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion: Book II and III*, 631 [80, 3, 2].
[153] Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion: Book II and III*, 631 [80, 3, 3].
[154] Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion: Book I*, 5 [Proem I, 4,8].
[155] Cf. Alexander Patschovsky, 'Der Ketzer als Teufelsdiener,' in *Papsttum, Kirche und Recht im Mittelalter: Festschrift für Horst Fuhrmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Hubert Mordek (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1991), 317-334.; Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 18-31; Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, 73-78. The whole complex of accusations could also appear without the Satanist element, as would be the case with the persecutions of the lepers in 1321; see Ginzburg, *o.c.* 33-63.
[156] See for a glimpse of the historiographic problems that confront the historian here the articles in the volume edited by Monique Zerner, *Inventer l'hérésie? Discours polémiques et pouvoirs avant l'Inquisition* (Nice: Z'éditions, 1998), as well as Daniela Müller, 'Les historiens et la question de la vérité historique: L'église cathare a-t-elle existé?' in *1209-2009. Cathares: Une histoire à pacifier? Actes du colloque international tenue à Mazamet les 15, 16 et 17 mai 2009*, ed. Anne Brenon (Portet-sur-Garonne: Nouvelles Éditions Loubatières, 2010), 139-154.

the veneration of Satan or any other evil principle.[157] The Waldensians, to name another group, probably originated as a local reform group for lay piety that eventually fell foul of the ecclesiastical authorities.[158]

It will come as no surprise that the Jews, perennial others of medieval society, can also be included on the long list of religious groups that were accused of venerating demons or the devil. In fact, Jews had been confronted with insinuations about their special relationship with the Demon for at least as long as dissident Christians. The Book of Revelation already referred to Jews who failed to convert as 'the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie' (Rev. 3, 9). In the fourth century, the Greek Father of the Church, John Chrysostom, described the synagogues of the Jews as 'the homes of idolatry and devils, even though they have no images in them'.[159] Medieval thought was ambiguous about the exact status of the Jewish minority. Officially, they could not be considered heretics from Christianity, as their faith clearly antedated that of the Church. But had they not repudiated the Christ, although he had been so clearly foretold as the coming Messiah in their own scriptures? And had they not been responsible for his crucifixion? In many cases, views about the Jews during the Middle Ages mirrored those about heretics, and vice versa. Jews hated Christians; Jewish prayers were directed to Satan; Jews practised demonic magic, desecrated hosts and holy images, slaughtered Christian children for their mysterious rituals.[160] Some anti-Jewish polemicists claimed that the Jews had allied themselves collectively with the devil – or, more precisely, with the demon Ben Tamalyon, who in return for their fealty had managed to undo a Roman decree prohibiting Jewish religious observances after the destruction of the Second Temple.[161]

The attribution of Satanism thus became part of a complex of allegations serving to demonize the religious other. This attribution did not derive from actual practised Satanism. Rather it was yet another manifestation, adjusted to time and place, of the many forms of reversal that have been attributed to the 'other' in history. In this manner, the 'heretic' was imagined as the negative of the normal medieval Christian: transgressing accepted sexual mores, profaning what was holy, and worshipping what was evil. The fact that most dissenting Christians did not give the impression of being worshippers of the Demon did not deter their Roman Catholic opponents. 'How is it possible to recognize a heretic?' is a question often recurring in medieval books on heresology. The paradoxical answer frequently given is: by his outstanding piety, care for those in need, and seemingly god-fearing way of life. This apparent devotion, however, is nothing but a mask: 'speciem sanctitatis et fidei pretendunt, veritatem autem eius non habent' – holiness and faith they feign, neither of which they truly have.[162] In

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[157] Daniela Müller, 'Gott und seine zwei Frauen: Der Teufel bei den Katharern,' *@KIH-eSkript. Interdisziplinäre Hexenforschung online* 3 (2011) 1:69-76, at http://www.historicum.net/no_cache/persistent/artikel/9107 (accessed 14 December 2011).

[158] Michel Rubellin, 'Au temps où Valdès n'était pas hérétique: Hypothèse sur le rôle de Valdès à Lyon (1170-1183),' in *Inventer l'hérésie? Discours polémiques et pouvoirs avant l'Inquisition*, ed. Monique Zerner (Nice: Z'éditions, 1998), 193-218.

[159] Cf. Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America', 1961), 21.

[160] Léon Poliakov, *Histoire de l'antisémitisme: Du Christ aux Juifs de cour* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1955), 140-171; Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews,* 26, 64-71, 115, 125-139, 181.

[161] Raymond Martin, *Pugio Fidei*, XIV.19, cited in Syds Wiersma's forthcoming dissertation on this Spanish priest.

[162] Stephan de Bourbon cited in Herbert Grundmann, 'Der Typus des Ketzers in Mittelalterlicher Anschauung,' in *Kultur- und Universalgeschichte. Walter Goetz zu seinem 60. Geburtstage dargebracht von Fachgenossen, Freunden und Schülern* (Leipzig, B.G. Teubner 1927), 91-107, there 97; see also 102. Grundmann's ground-breaking article, though already old, is still highly illuminating in many ways. For a more recent treatment, see Daniela Müller, 'Our Image of 'Others' and Our Own Identity', in *Iconoclasm and Iconoclash: Struggle for Religious Identity*, ed. Willem van Asselt, Paul van Geest, and others (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 107-123.

actual reality, it was maintained, horrendous things went on behind the scenes of their gatherings. The secretiveness of their goings-on already was a strong clue to this. How scandalous must their religion appear to themselves, that they shun the light of day like this, both Berthold von Regenburg and Bernard de Clairvaux exclaim, inadvertly echoing old accusations brought up against the early Christians.[163]

In the thirteenth century, this complex of allegations centering on devil worship and antinomian behaviour began to attain something like a stature of independence when ecclesiastical and other authors started to mention a sect of 'Luciferians'. The first appearance of these Luciferians in the sources dates from around 1231, when a chronicle from Trier tells us about a religious circle led by a certain Lucardis, a woman 'who was presumed to lead a most holy life', but in fact, it was discovered, deplored 'with lamentations the unjust expulsion from heaven of Lucifer', whom they hoped to see restored to heavenly rule again.[164] The alleged worship of Lucifer by Lucardis' circle had been brought to light by Conrad of Marburg, one of the first papal inquisitors, who swiftly set to work to unmask some more Luciferian conventicles. When he met with resistance from the local nobility, Pope Gregorius IX came to his aid by sending the bull *Vox in Rama*. This papal document (dated 1233 or 1234) contains an elaborate description of the ceremonies and customs of the Luciferians, which by now will not sound unfamiliar:

> In that pest the initiation is performed in this way. When the novice is received by them and from the first time enters the school of the damned, there appears to him some kind of animal more or less like that which we use to call a frog or a toad. Some then kiss him on the behind and some on the mouth, in a damnable way receiving the tongue and the saliva of the beast in their mouth. […] Only then, when he goes on, does the novice come upon a man with a very pale face who has completely dark eyes, and is so very lean and skinny that of his consumed flesh only the relics of the skin are visible over his bones. The novice is kissed by him and this feels cold like ice and after this kiss all memory of the catholic faith has completely vanished from his heart. After this they sit down to their meal, and when they have finished it completely, a black cat that they keep as a statue in their schools descends to them with its back turned to them in the way of a common dog and its tail curled up. This they kiss on its behind, first the novice, then the master, and after that it is kissed in this way by every single one who is worthy of this and belongs to the *perfecti*. The imperfect however, who consider themselves not worthy to do this, receive the peace from the master, and everyone in this place chants some hymns and incline their heads to the cat. 'Spare us,' says the master, and the next one makes this plea also, with the third one responding to what is said: 'We know you [are the] master'; the fourth one says: 'And we have to obey.'
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> And when this is done like that, the candle is extinguished, and they proceed to practice the most obnoxious works of lust, without making any difference between those who are related and those who are not. When sometimes there are many more men than women, the men, swept with ignoble passions and the unquenchable fire of their desires, perform their shameful acts in men, in the same way as they would make natural use of them when they would have been women, which is against nature, and in which way they make themselves worthy of damnation.
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> When they have finished staining themselves with this extreme wickedness, the candles are lit again and each retreats to his proper place. From a dark corner in the school, where the most damned of men are in no short supply, some man comes forth

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[163] Grundmann, 'Typus des Ketzers,' 98.

[164] 'Gestorum Treverorum Continuatio IV,' in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica inde ab Anno Christi quingentesimo usque ad annum millesimum et quintegentesimum. Scriptorum* (Hannoverae: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1879), 24:401 and 24:401n. On Lucardis, see Daniela Müller, *Frauen vor der Inquisition: Lebensform, Glaubenszeugnis und Aburteilung der deutschen und französischen Katharerinnen*. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, No. 166 (Mainz, Von Zabern, 1996), 46-47 and 219-222.

> shining from above with a light clear as the sun, as they say, and from below bristly like a cat, whose splendour illuminates the whole place. Than the master takes out those in the vestment of a novice, and says to the shining one: 'Master, this of mine I give to you,' and the shining one responds: 'You have served me well with many good slaves, I commit in your custody what you gave me.' And this saying he disappears.
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> During several years, they even received the Body of the Lord from the hand of the priest at Easter, and, bringing it home to their houses in their mouths, threw it in the latrine in insult of the Redemptor. And to this these most unhappy of all miserables, with their polluted lips add blasphemy against the heavenly order, raving that the Lord secretly violated against justice and treacherously wanted to destroy Lucifer in the inferno. And this the miserables really believe, and they affirm that the same [Lucifer] is the true founder of the heavens, who will again restore himself to glory and throw down the Lord; and they expect to have eternal bliss with him and not earlier than him. Everything that does please God they profess not to do, and when they can they do what He hates.[165]

References to these elusive 'Luciferians' continued to trickle in throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with a few new details added from time to time. Inquisition reports from fourteenth-century Germany, for instance, contain references to a Satanic paternoster and a Luciferian formula for baptism: 'Lucifer, dear Lord, give this child goods and honours; he will be thine with body and soul.'[166] Modern historiography agrees on its entirely fictitious nature.[167] What the real character was of groups that were branded as Luciferians is often hard to ascertain. In the descriptions of Gregory IX, we can recognize some elements that were commonly ascribed to Catharism, particularly the worship of a cat-demon. The Luciferians that were rounded up in fourteenth-century Brandenburg have been identified with some measure of confidence as Waldensians.[168]

exorcising the devil's fifth column

The concept of Satanism, in brief, sprang into existence as a polemic tool. When we speak of this complex of attribution as *propaganda*, however, this does not mean to imply that the assertions it encompassed were not believed. Although unscrupulous rulers sometimes made use of these allegations for their own ends (as was clearly the case with the French King Phillip IV against the Templars and the Jews, for instance), we have no reason to doubt the sincerity of others. Moreover, the attribution of Satanism to the religious other was not merely a rhetoric tool in a battle of words. Due to the intimate (if not always harmonious) entanglement of Christian religion and secular power, allegations of devil worship and heresy could often result in severe legal repercussions. In many cases, the community's drive to

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[165] Pope Gregorius IX, 'Vox in Rama,' in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica inde ab Anno Christi quingentesimo usque ad annum millesimum et quintegentesimum. Epistolae Saeculi XIII e Regestis Pontifcum Romanorum selectae*, ed. G. H. Pertz and Carolus Rodenberg (Berolini: apud Weidmannos, 1883) 1:432-434, there 1:433, l. 8-44. Gregorius' description of the practices of the Luciferians, it must be noted, is derived almost verbatim from a letter sent to him by Conrad of Marburg.

[166] Dietrich Kurze, 'Zur Ketzergeschichte der Mark Brandenburg und Pommerns vornehmlich im 14. Jahrhundert,' *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands* 16-17 (1968): 50-94, there 93. The formula is transmitted in the German vernacular: 'Lucifer, leve herre, gyf ime gut vnde ere, dyt kynt daz sal ewek dyn wessen mit libe vnde sele'.

[167] Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 31-33, 56; Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials*, 15. Some historians (Grundmann, 'Typus des Ketzers', 105n) maintain that the whole heresy of Luciferianism was an invention suggested by the Late-Antique Luciferians. These had nothing to do with the devil, but were followers of Lucifer of Cagliari, a fourth-century bishop declared heterodox because of his extreme hard-line views on the reacceptance of former Arians into the Catholic Church. An in-depth modern coverage of the Luciferians is still lacking.

[168] Kurze, 'Zur Ketzergeschichte der Mark Brandenburg,' 50-94.

purify society of a Satanic presence entailed the physical destruction of the accused. Exorcism imperceptibly evolved into persecution; cosmic liberation into local repression.

To put the rest of our history into its proper perspective, it might be worthwhile to trace the outlines of this development and briefly sketch the emergence of this 'machinery of persecution', to use the celebrated phrase coined by R. I. Moore. Initially, adherents to Christianity themselves suffered periodical persecutions at the hands of the pagan emperors, who considered the new religion a threat to the cohesion and stability of the Empire. As the number of Christian adherents continued to grow, Constantine became the first Roman emperor to legalize the Christian faith in 313 CE. Christianity was made the official religion of the Empire by an edict from 380 issued by the Roman Emperor Theodosius. Henceforth, the old pagan religions were gradually forced into illegality and oblivion. In 399 CE, the pagan cults were prohibited; in 407 an imperial edict ordered the destruction of pagan temples. In his later sermons, Augustine of Hippo spoke of the 'few pagans that remain' and described them as convening clandestinely in secret hide-outs, continuously in fear of police infiltrators in civil disguise.[169] By the seventh century, the Syrian monk John of Damascus triumphantly declared that 'the worship of demons' had all but ceased: 'Altars and temples of idols have been overthrown. Knowledge of God has been implanted. […] The demons tremble at the men who were formerly in their power.'[170]

The Christian church that had now become dominant in the Roman Empire and would continue to be so in the West for more than a millennium was a specific faction within the fractioned body of the Christian faith. In fact, this church was in large measure the creation of Emperor Constantine, who had needed a unified church to provide the necessary religious backbone to the Empire. In 326, Constantine issued an edict that excluded 'heretics and schismatics' from the privileges that had been extended to the officially sanctioned church, and in addition subjugated these outsiders to 'various compulsory public services'.[171] His successors continued this policy, issuing legislation to confiscate the churches and property of heretics and curtail their civil rights. Manichean Christians especially were the target of persecution. The pagan Emperor Diocletian had already taken harsh actions against this group, whom he suspected of secretly conspiring against the Empire (due, probably, to the provenance of their religion in Persia, Rome's archenemy). In addition, they were believed to practise *maleficium*, malevolent sorcery. The latter circumstance probably explains why he ordered their leaders to be executed by fire, the traditional punishment for maleficium in Roman law.[172] After the declaration of Christianity as an official religion, Theodosius reinstated the death penalty for Manicheanism and a number of other heresies that were declared to be mere cover-ups for it. He also called a special judicial organ into being to prosecute these heretics, with its own 'inquisitores' to track them down; 'orthodox' believers, moreover, were given the right to initiate pogroms against them on their own accord. With Justinian, in the sixth century CE, the stake was re-established for Manichean ecclesiasts (and their books), while every citizen was henceforth held legally obliged to report suspected Manichees to the imperial authorities.[173]

The Christian church (or at least the part of it that basked in official favour) did not raise many objections to the imperial repression of its competitors. Bishop Martin of Tours, it is

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[169] Cited in Anne-Isabelle Bouton-Toubolic, 'Le *De diuinatione daemonum* de Saint Augsutin,' in *Fictions du Diable. Démonologie et littérature de saint Augustin à Léo Taxil*, ed. Françoise Lavocat, Pierre Kapitaniak, and Marianne Closson (Genève: Librairie Droz, 2007), 15-34, there 15-21(n).

[170] John of Damascus, *Writings*, transl. Frederic H. Chase, Jr. (New York, Fathers of the Church, Inc, 1958), 338.

[171] R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 12; Daniela Müller, 'Aspekte der Ketzerverfolgung unter den römischen Kaisern bis Justinian,' *The Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 60 (2008) 1-4:175-193, there 182.

[172] Müller, 'Aspekte der Ketzerverfolgung,' 181(n), 182-183.

[173] Müller, 'Aspekte der Ketzerverfolgung,' 186-190.

true, protested when Pricillian of Avila was burnt on the stake on trumped-up charges of maleficium and sexual misdemeanour in 383 (possibly as a Manichean, although he in fact led a lay movement of rigorous asceticism that had nothing to do with Manicheanism) – and Ambrose of Milan and Pope Sicirius belatedly excommunicated Priscillan's accusers.[174] But church leaders in the West increasingly lost their reluctance to call in the strong arm of the law against unruly elements within the ranks of the faithful. When Augustine of Hippo was confronted with a particularly stubborn dissident movement in his diocese in North Africa, he did not prove averse to armed intervention by the authorities. On this occasion, he also formulated his infamous doctrine of *compelle intrare* ('force them to enter'), the first ideological justification of religious coercion by an authoritative Christian theologian. Western Christianity, it must be noted, experienced a different development in this respect than that in the East, where the persecution of heretics remained a matter for the emperor, acting primarily in the interest of the state.[175] In the West, the cooperation of religious and secular authorities in the fight to eradicate religious deviance was much more intense. As the western part of the Roman Empire gradually collapsed, Catholic bishops often remained the last vestige of political order, frequently obtaining considerable secular powers in the process. This was especially clear in Rome itself, where the last Roman emperors presented a sad spectacle of insignificance, while the Roman pope had become the real figure of power.
In the early Middle Ages, the political fragmentation of Western Christianity and the collapse of central power made other matters than routing out heresy more urgent for the Church. West European society and West European Christianity returned in great measure to being a local affair, having only limited dealings with central government, be it secular or ecclesiastical. The Germanic invaders who dominated the West adhered to a different faction of Christianity (that of Arianism), and the Roman Catholic Church devoted most of its energies to bringing their ruling families into its fold and thus regaining its own dominance. In addition, new waves of pagan barbarians inside and outside the old Christian heartland had to be coaxed into a nominal acceptance of Christianity by way of missionary efforts, free baptismal gowns, and sheer military force. But when cities, commerce, international contacts, higher learning, and central government began to flourish again in the later Middle Ages, persecution also revived. At the same time, the legal and ideological constructs of Late Antiquity that had facilitated it were taken from the shelf as well. Among the first victims of this revival were the above-mentioned Stephanus and Lisoius, who were condemned as 'New Manichees' in 1022. With a dozen more victims, they were solemnly burned to ashes outside the city walls of Toulouse – a penalty from Roman times, inflicted on them for their alleged membership of a religious group from Roman times, on the basis of revamped anti-heretical propaganda from Roman times.[176]

Under the Papacy of Gregorius VII (ca. 1015-1085), the drive towards a universal and uniform Christian community re-established itself in all its vigour. Gregorius would give his name to an ambitious campaign to reorganize the church which has become known as the

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[174] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 12-13, Müller, 'Aspekte der Ketzerverfolgung,' 187-188.
[175] Müller, 'Aspekte der Ketzerverfolgung,' 191, citing Beck, *Actus Fidei*, 43. Ecclesiastical authorities in the East proved significantly less inclined to legitimise the use of force against religious opponents. When, in the ninth century, the Byzantine emperor issued an edict sentencing the Paulicians to death, Abbot Theodore of the Studiu monastery protested vehemently and successfully, arguing that execution made it impossible for heretics to convert; rather, one should admonish them and pray for them.
[176] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 15-16; Müller, 'Aspekte der Ketzerverfolgung,' 188-19; Patschovsky, 'Ketzer als Teufelsdiener,' 319-320. It is clear that their identification as Manichees was mere pretext. In reality, they probably adhered to a Neo-Platonic form of Christian asceticism; this was only subsidiary circumstance anyway, as the true ground for their conviction lay in a conflict between local rulers regarding the control of the bishopric.

Gregorian Reforms. Among the measures it proposed were compulsory celibacy for the clergy and the stamping out of simony (the buying and selling of ecclesiastical dignities and benefits). Yet the most ambitious goal of the reformers was the promotion of the Roman Papacy as supreme authority in all matters religious and secular. Even by themselves, the Gregorian Reforms created heresy. Although he presented them as age-old, Gregorius' reforms were in fact quite novel. Christian communities which had been following different traditions for centuries now suddenly found themselves heretics, while the reforming program also fostered radicals who wanted to go further than the religious authorities thought feasible.

More important, however, at least in the long run, was the way the reformers sought to create a centrally organized church that would dominate Europe and be in turn dominated by the Papacy. Disobedience to the pope, more than doctrinal position, henceforth demarcated the thin line between orthodoxy and heresy.[177] This allegiance to Latin Christendom increasingly defined the outlines of a new concept of *christianitas*, understood as 'the collectivity of the *populus Christianus* as a social and temporal, as well as spiritual unity'.[178] In its territorial dimension, this cultural and geographical community became roughly synonymous with 'Europe' and the 'Christian West', which in its turn would eventually modify and extend itself into the 'Western World' as we know it today. It was a precarious bulwark of the faithful, surrounded by a sea of Islamic 'heathens', Eastern Orthodox schismatici, and pagan barbarians.

The renewed concept of *christianitas* also led to a renewed urge to define who formed part of it, and who not, and a renewed effort to exclude the latter from the community. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council issued a famous decree that defined the community of the faithful as those who confessed to their priest and took communion at least once a year, thus consolidating, at least theoretically, the control of the clergy over ordinary believers. The council also consolidated the 'machinery of persecution' of the Roman Catholic Church, issuing canons that prescribed the excommunication of heretics and their subsequent surrender to the secular power for punishment. Bishops should inspect presumed hoards of heresy at least once a year, and compel the local population under oath to report any cases of religious deviance they knew. Secular rulers 'ought publicly to take an oath that they will strive in good faith and to the best of their ability to exterminate in the territories subject to their jurisdiction all heretics pointed out by the Church'; if they failed to do so, their subjects had the right to withdraw their allegiance to them.[179] Anyone who sheltered, defended, or failed to take action against heretics was to be considered a heretic as well.[180]

In the 1230s, Pope Gregorius IX added a further bolt to the persecution machine when he established the Papal Inquisition. Its purpose was to enable the bypassing of local episcopal authority and allow the Papacy to act against heretics on its own initiative. One of its first actions was Konrad of Marburg's campaign against Luciferians in Germany. It was a beginning that looked ominous for the future. The contemporary *Gestorum Treverorum* depicts Konrad's activities as a veritable rampage that left a trail of smouldering bodies behind. Out of fear for their lives and property, the chronicle tells, people started to denunciate those who had neither knowledge of nor inclination towards heresy, and many innocent people suffered.[181] Konrad's power was curbed when he accused a local nobleman of

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[177] Müller, 'Our Image of 'Others',' 13.

[178] Nora Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims and 'Pagans' in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000 – c. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 43. Cf. pp. 42-53 of this publication for more information regarding the *christianitas* concept.

[179] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 7.

[180] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 7-8.

[181] 'Gestorum Treverorum,' in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptorum*, 24:400-401. In a typical medieval twist, the chronicle also adds that many real heretics gave themselves up to the inquisitors pretending to be penitent and then falsely reported 'Catholics and innocents'.

heresy after 'witnesses' reported that he had attended nocturnal orgies riding on a crab; and as the inquisitor travelled down a lonely road one day, he was duly assassinated by hired killers.[182] But the rising tide of persecution, inquisition, and repression was not so easily turned. Torture was increasingly applied to extract confessions of heresy by both the secular and ecclesiastical authorities; in 1252, its use by inquisitorial officers was ratified by Pope Innocent IV in his bull *Ad extirpanda*. The increasing tendency to transform dissident believers into monstrous adulators of Satan was intimately correlated with these developments. 'In the contemporary mind, the categorization of heresy as a crime deserving death was closely connected to its definition as devil worship,' the German historian Alexander Patschovsky wrote in this respect.[183]

The formation of a West European Christianity that aggressively sought to maintain and expand its spiritual dominance also had repercussions for the Jewish population. Since Antiquity, the Jewish community had enjoyed a certain measure of religious autonomy, the negative pendant of which was their exclusion from certain civil rights. Christian theologians had argued the legitimacy of their continuing presence because they functioned as 'living witnesses' to the authenticity of the Old Testament, in addition referring to the prophecy of Paul the Apostle that 'a remnant' of Jewry would be converted and saved in the last of days (Romans 9, 27-28). For a long time, Jews thus remained the only legally tolerated non-Christian religious minority in Christian Europe. With the revival of the *christianitas* ideal, however, church misgivings about a strong Jewish presence and its possible 'Judaising' influence on Christians also increased. Ecclesiastical authorities urged the maintenance of old restrictions on the Jews and the imposition of new ones, for instance, the exclusion of Jews from landownership. At the same time, old stereotypes about Jews were revived and new ones invented, such as the stories about the profanation of the host and ritual slaughter of Christian children. The latter theme resurfaced in the twelfth century and would become a staple of anti-Jewish propaganda for centuries to come.[184]
Allegations like these, and the connected attribution of demon worship, certainly functioned as legitimating and instigating factors for the violence directed against the medieval Jewish community by secular rulers and Christian mobs. The Roman Catholic Church played an ambivalent role in these developments. On the one hand, it condemned physical violence against Jews, and many ecclesiastical dignitaries tried to protect local Jewish communities from massacre, for instance, in the wave of pogroms that accompanied the first crusades. On the other hand, the Church argued for curtailment of the Jewish 'other', who had to remain subjugated and 'dispersed' as a punishment for his involvement in the crucifixion of Jesus. Clerical writers played a leading role in the invention and propagation of allegations against the Jews, in a sometimes vehement effort to counteract the threatening religious competition they perceived Judaism to be.[185]

The demonising rhetoric of European Christianity in the later Middle Ages thus formed part of the increasing belligerence with which this religion sought to enforce its universal claims against both inner and outer rivals. The demonisation of these often self-created 'enemies' was already striking in the writings of Gregorius VII and would find a preliminary zenith in the fantasies of Gregorius IX, quoted above.[186] Significantly, Gregorius VII also was the first

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[182] Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 24-29.
[183] Patschovsky, 'Der Ketzer als Teufelsdiener,' 326: 'Im Bewußtsein der Zeitgenossen korrespondierte die Einstufung der Ketzerei als eines todeswürdigen Verbrechens also auf engste mit deren Definition als Teufelsdienst.'
[184] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 36-37.
[185] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 27-45; Wiersma, forthcoming.

pope to attempt to organize a crusade against the Islamic 'heathens' (although this project was not materialized till over half a century later). The causes of this increasing mobilization against the enemies of the divine were manifold and complex. Yet the general mechanisms signalled by David Frankfurter might be applicable here as well.[187] When local communities become involved in the turmoil of the greater world, local world views are often replaced or absorbed by more universal ones. This might also have occurred in a Western Europe that began to experience an increase in economic activity, international contacts, and governmental centralization from the later Middle Ages onward. The tendency within Western Christianity during this period towards a more centralized, uniform, and universal faith was certainly connected with this. Hand in hand with this general trend went a new (or rather: revived) globalisation and uniformisation of the sources of misfortune and evil. In this way, the neighbour who practised Judaism or some different variant of Christianity suddenly could become an agent in the global network of Satan.

This also makes clear why the idea of *conspiracy* played such a prominent role in the attribution of Satanism during this period. Dissident Christians and other outsiders were not merely engaging in unspeakably abominable forms of worship, they were also actively engaged in bringing misfortune. Jews were conspiring with Saracens; sorcerers with Jews; heretics with sorcerers and other heretics; and all were in league with the demons or their master the devil.[188] It is striking to see how the other is consistently perceived and described as a *threat* in the sources from this period, a worrying presence menacing the precarious safety of the religious and social community – while the reality was in most cases exactly the reverse, with the expanding power of European Roman Catholicism threatening its opponents. At the same time, this rhetorical demonisation of the other served to demarcate and cement the community's own identity. More than this, this identity was in large measure formed and formulated *during* this process of confrontation and exclusion.

the Satanist conspiracy of witchcraft[189]

The tendency to deprecate the religious other through systematic attribution of Satanism survived the fragmentation of Western *christianitas* in the early modern period. Catholic polemicists deployed old stereotypes about Satanist heretics against Protestant Christians, while Protestants accused the Roman Catholic Church of demonic idolatry and proclaimed the Roman pope to be a servant of Satan.[190] Indeed, it was to be exactly in this period that fears for a conspiracy of devil-worshippers would reach a historical apogee. From the start of the early modern era, rumors of a widespread cult of Satan reached alarming intensity in parts of the Western world. Contemporary authors began to speak of a new, ultramalicious 'sectam modernum' that sought to overthrow Christendom from within. Its adherents could be found in all segments of society, but particularly among women. They allegedly used magic to

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[186] On Gregorius VII, see Müller, 'Our Image of 'Others',' 111

[187] Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 7.

[188] A striking illustration of this can be found in Gary K. Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions: Anabaptists and Witches in Reformation Europe, 1525-1600* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 257n, who mentions a stained-glass window commissioned in Nuremberg in 1598 depicting a Jew about to stab a child while a witch assists him.

[189] Scholarly publications about witchcraft could currently fill a small library. For my treatment of witchcraft, I have particularly drawn upon the following authors: Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, and Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials*, as well as articles in the volumes *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Center and Peripheries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Hennigsen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), and *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, ed. Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). For additional insights, Boureau, *Satan the Heretic*, and Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, proved invaluable. Also useful was the concise overview by Michaela Valente, 'Witchcraft (15th-17th centuries),' in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff. 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 2:1174-1177.

[190] See, among others, Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 17, 34-35.

inflict harm on good Christians and convened in isolated and far-away places, such as the tops of mountains, which they could reach because a magic ointment enabled them to fly. There they performed atrocities and blasphemous rites, before having sex with the devil, and each other.
Readers familiar with the history of religion or with fairy tales will have recognized these new Satanists as witches. From the fifteenth century on, the Witch Scare moved over Europe much as the Plague had done earlier, starting in Northern Italy and parts of France and reaching areas in the periphery like Scandinavia, Hungary, and North America only towards the end of the seventeenth century or later.[191] In its wake, recent research has calculated, some thirty to fifty thousand people were put to death on the scaffold or the stake.[192] Many more suffered severe repercussions. In terms of human life and loss, the early modern witch persecutions may have exceeded the earlier heresy persecutions. In fact, as we shall see, the two were intricately connected in a variety of ways; and the attribution of Satanism *avant le lettre* was one of the most important links between them.

Contrary to popular opinion, hunting witches was not the exclusive preserve of the Roman Catholic Church – and much less of the Roman and Spanish Inquisitions, which were in fact rather lenient towards those accused of witchcraft.[193] Rather, it was an activity in which the secular authorities enthusiastically shared, Protestant as well as Roman Catholic. Moreover, the belief in witchcraft and *maleficium* – the ability to enact harm by magical means – long predated Christianity. The power to ward off demons and harmful cosmic forces (by naming them properly and using apt rituals) assumed a certain control over them that left open the possibility of its mirror image as well: directing these demons or cosmic forces to bring misfortune on those to whom one was for whatever reason unfavourably disposed. This practice, and the fear of it, has been documented from very early times.[194] The pagan Romans already considered *maleficium* to be an exceptionally horrendous crime for which they reserved one of their harshest legal sanctions, that of being burnt alive.
The coming of Christianity initially did not necessarily mean bad news for those accused of witchcraft. Charlemagne's new law for his Saxon territories, for instance, forbade the heathen Saxons to *eat* witches – apparently the customary retribution for the magic cannibalism witches were supposed to practise.[195] Theological considerations also made ecclesiastical authorities sceptical about certain popular conceptions regarding maleficium. Although Satan and his demons were extremely powerful, official theology maintained, as angels, they were essentially spirits, and thus unable to change material reality. Their influence extended itself

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[191] Bengt Ankarloo, 'Introduction,' in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Center and Peripheries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Hennigsen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 1-15, there 12; Robert Muchembled, *A History of the Devil: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 148.
[192] Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 15. For some glimpses of the harsh realities of the witch persecutions, see for instance Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 90; Robert Muchembled, 'Satanic Myths and Cultural Reality,' in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Center and Peripheries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Hennigsen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 139-160, 143. Thousands of cats were burnt on the stake as diabolical agents as well (Cf. Müller, Müller, 'Our Image of 'Others',' 114).
[193] Julio Caro Baroja, 'Witchcraft and Catholic Theology,' in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Center and Peripheries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Hennigsen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 19-43, particularly 34-35. John Tedeschi has devoted much of his scholarly career to rehabilitating the Roman Inquisition from the Black Legend that surrounds it; see for instance his article in the same volume, 'Inquisitorial Law and the Witch', 83-118.
[194] Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 21.
[195] Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 208. Incidentally, Charlemagne also decreed that those found guilty of sorcery 'should be turned over to the Church as slaves, while those who sacrificed to the Devil (i.e., the Germanic gods) should be killed'; Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 179.

exclusively through manipulation of the human psyche by way of sinful suggestions, illusions, and possession. Deliberations like these seem to have formed the background for the well-known *Canon Episcopi*, a directive for tenth-century bishops that already mentions women who claim to go on night rides with Diana or Herodias. The text of the *Canon Episcopi* makes it quite clear that the nightly activities of these women were mere delusions: the real sin was to believe in the reality of these fantasies.[196]

This did not prevent belief in the danger of maleficium from being wide-spread in the Middle Ages. Nor was it solely the preserve of the uneducated or rural populace, as is shown by the frequent scandals evolving maleficium that erupted at the courts of Christian monarchs from the fourth up to the eighteenth centuries. The crucial step that made possible the massive witchcraft persecutions of the early modern era was the application of the Satanist stereotype that had been developed about Jews and heretics to the practice of sorcery.[197] There were some starting points for this in the earlier propaganda against the religious other. Already in Antiquity, as we have seen, the Manicheans were suspected of practising maleficium, a suspicion sometimes extended to other heretic groups.[198] Jews enjoyed a similar reputation as sorcerers in the popular and learned imagination.[199] Towards the end of the Middle Ages, the reverse step was also made in some places: that of regarding sorcerers as members of a heretical organisation. During the fourteenth century, the papacy formally declared demonic magic heresy and veneration of Satan.[200] Towards 1400, the first trials for sectarian witchcraft – that is, witchcraft allegedly practised in an organised sect, rather than by an individual in relative isolation – were held in the Savoyard Alps. Research by notable witchcraft historians has shown this occurrence to be directly related to the Inquisition persecution of Waldensians just a few decades before, during which the inquisitors had transformed the Waldensians into a sect of devil-worshipping sorcerers who convened at secret sabbats.[201] This demonising effort was evidently successful. In certain parts of Europe, the designation 'valdesia' or 'vauderie' (Waldensianism) grew not only into a general brand name for heresy, but also into a familiar synonym for witchcraft.[202]

As the new concept of witchcraft gained ground, the age-old practitioner of witchcraft was suddenly seen in a new light, and indeed was often conceived of as something entirely new. In the texts of those who combatted witchcraft, the witches are commonly described as a 'new sect', a *sectam modernum*, or sometimes, and equally significant, as a 'synagogum diabolorum', a synagogue of devils. 'In this very sect or Synagogue of bewitchers not only women assemble, but also men,' writes the Dominican Inquisitor Nicolaus Jaquerius in 1458, '& what is worse, even Ecclesiastics and monks, who converse tangibly with the Demons which appear among them in various forms and under their own names. These same bewitchers venerate and adore the demons with bended knees and kisses, receiving them as Lords & Masters, abrogating God & the Catholic faith & its mysteries. In exchange, the demons promise them protection and help whenever they are invoked; upon which invocation the same demons appear to them, no matter when during the day, be it inside the Synagogue, be it in other places; and they come to their aid on demand and the Demons themselves give them poisons and substances to perpetrate crimes.'[203] Significantly, Jaquerius in the very same

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[196] Boureau, *Satan the Heretic*, 12; Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials*, 39. These ideas can be found among many earlier Christian authors, for instance, Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Panarion: Book I*, 94.

[197] Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials*, 20-22.

[198] Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Panarion: Book I*, 101, regarding the Carpocratians.

[199] Poliakov, *Histoire de l'antisémitisme*, 166.

[200] Boureau, *Satan the Heretic*, especially 14-15, 54-67, 203.

[201] Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 11-12, Wolfgang Behringer, 'How Waldensians became Witches: Heretics and their Journey to the Other World,' in *Communicating with the Spirits*, ed. Gabor Klaniczay, Eva Pócs, and others (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005), 155-192

[202] Kurze, 'Zur Ketzergeschichte der Mark Brandenburg,' 60.

section explicitly tries to show that the 'new sect' he describes is not identical with that mentioned in the *Canon Episcopi*. In his infamous *Malleus Maleficarum* ('Hammer of the Witches') from 1487, Heinrich Kramer also devoted many words to the seeming discrepancy between the old canon and the new notions about witchcraft, vehemently defending the idea that a diabolical sect of sorcerers was trying to destroy Christendom from within by way of magic, with women being especially prominent among their numbers.[204]

The idea of Satanic witchcraft thus was neither traditional nor popular; on the contrary, it was developed by an educated elite and propagated by those who were able to participate in the most recent scholarly insights. The postulation of a heretic, devil-worshipping conspiracy behind the practice of sorcery also had important practical implications. Inquisitorial judicial procedures could now be used in the persecution of maleficium, while before convictions of maleficium could only occur after somebody who was 'damaged' by the perpetrator had laid charges against him or her and managed to prove them.[205] Because of its character as a *crimen exceptum*, furthermore, torture could legally be used to extract confessions; and because of its presumed collective nature, legal authorities tended to search for accomplices. This combination could easily lead to an epidemic of witchcraft prosecutions.

Through their sheer scale, the witchcraft persecutions also indicate the further strengthening of central, non-local forms of authority that had taken place in Western Europe.[206] Issues regarding maleficium, which of yore would have been settled by communal justice in various brutal ways, were now brought before courts of law, where they were forced into the mould that was used by the educated judges. Secular authorities not only facilitated but also initiated these proceedings. In general, the sharp distinction between the religious and the secular that would characterize modern society did not exist yet, and while church, monarchy, and nobility might dispute each other's exact prerogatives, the validity of Christianity as a religious framework for society was uncontested. Monarchs and secular authorities considered it their responsibility to combat heresy and witchcraft, not only out of political motivations, but also because tolerating these ungodly activities might invoke divine wrath over their realm.[207]

Nor do we need to imagine the rural or urban populace as passive and helpless providers of victims. As noted above, (fears of) witchcraft and sorcery had of yore been an intrinsic part of premodern community life. While the concept of witchcraft as a Satanist conspiracy was primarily a construct adopted by an educated elite, the idea that maleficium was responsible for all kinds of personal and collective misfortune certainly was not. Witchcraft was deemed responsible for impotence in marriage, milk that turned sour, beer that did not ferment, and all

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[203] Nicolaus Jaquerius, *Flagellum Haereticorum Fascinariorum* (Francofurti ad Moenum: [Nic. Bassaeus], 1581), 41 (chapter vii). 'In hac autem fascinariorum secta sive Synagoga conueniunt non solum mulierum, sed viri, & quod deterius est, etiam Ecclesiastici & Religiosi, qui stant & loquuntur cum Daemonibus perceptibiliter, inter eos apparantibus varijs formis, propijs nomibus, quos ipsis fascinarij, genibus flexis & osculis exhibitis adorant, & colunt, recipiendo eos in Dominos & Magistros, abnegando Deum & fidem catholicam, & fidei mysteria, quibus Daemones ipsi promittunt patrocinia & auxilia, cum ab eis inuocantur, quibus etiam ipsi Daemones postmodum ab eis inuocatio apparent quandoque de die, & in allis locis, quandoque in Synagoga, & eis suffragantur frequenter ad nutum, quibus estiam ipsi Daemones dant, veneficia & materias, ad maleficia perpetranda.'

[204] Jaquerius, *Flagellum Haereticorum Fascinariorum*, 36-51. Henricus Institoris and Jacobus Sprengerus, *Malleus Maleficarum*, ed. and trans. Christopher S. Mackay. 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2:44-54 (I Qu. I). Cf. 2:71-72 (I Qu. 2).

[205] An extensive discussion of this transformation can be found in Boureau, *Satan the Heretic*. See also Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials*, 18-19.

[206] Muchembled, 'Satanic Myths and Cultural Reality,'; Marko Nenonen, 'Culture Wars: State, Religion and Popular Culture in Europe, 1400-1800,' in *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, ed. Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 108-124. Compare Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 211.

[207] Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 19, 63, 199-202.

kinds of other natural calamities. Official campaigns to curb the activities of sorcerers might thus elicit enthusiastic support from the populace at large. Crop failure and natural calamities could arouse a demand for the extirpation of witches, as occurred in the Pfalz in 1586, when winter lasted unusually long and the bishop of Treves burnt 120 people after he had made them confess that they had postponed spring by magic.[208] Local government bodies sometimes requested central authorities to initiate legal procedures against witches, a request that was sometimes denied when central government had other priorities.[209]

At another level, popular conceptions also contributed to the witchcraft stereotype. Several historians have noted how folk traditions about the night witch, magical flight, the wild hunt, and the dances of the fairies were incorporated into the witchcraft stereotype.[210] These elements in turn may have reflected older cultural strata of pre-Christian origin, as Carlo Ginzburg has argued.[211] When suspects of witchcraft were interrogated, they sometimes volunteered local traditions about witches and the demonic. These might be added to the corpus of learned witchcraft lore and the check lists judges used for examining alleged cases of sectarian witchcraft, making the new, constructed sect of witches an ever-expanding repository of folklore about the otherworld.[212] Interaction between learned judges and local experts in dealing with magical misfortune could assume various forms. In a celebrated study, Ginzburg has described how the Inquisition was puzzled by the traditional anti-witchcraft specialists it met in Friuli, eventually deciding to persecute them as diabolical witches after all.[213] In contrast, Tyrolean law courts sometimes employed local soothsayers to coax confessions from Anabaptists they thought to be protected by a diabolical pact – not without some success, it seems.[214]

The roots in traditional culture of some elements of the early modern witchcraft complex seduced some historians in the past to propose the existence of an underground pagan cult as the origin of witchcraft rumors. The English Egyptologist Margaret Murray (1863-1963) was prominent in promoting this hypothesis, which found support among a host of authors on witchcraft and Satanism.[215] In the past three or four decades, this idea has been completely abandoned by witchcraft historians.[216] Certainly, all sorts of pagan remnants and parallel belief systems were hauled to the surface by the witch persecutions, such as the Friuli witch

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[208] Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 201.

[209] Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 187-189. On 'spontaneous' violence against sorcerers, see also Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 188.

[210] Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 196-197. See also Gustav Henningsen, ''The Ladies from Outside': An Archaic Pattern of the Witches' Sabbath,' in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Center and Peripheries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Hennigsen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 191-215; and Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, xii, 209-216.

[211] Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*. Peter Burke, 'The Comparative Approach to European Witchcraft', in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Center and Peripheries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Hennigsen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 435-441 (there 441) summarizes the matter with exceeding clarity: 'Behind the diabolical witchcraft of the witch-hunters has been discovered a more traditional, neighbourly witchcraft. Behind this in turn we are seeing glimpses of a still more archaic, shamanistic witchcraft.'

[212] On the standard interrogatories that were sometimes used by the judicial authorities, see Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials*, 91.

[213] Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft & Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983).

[214] Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 180.

[215] Margaret Alice Murray, *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), and *The God of the Witches* (London: Faber & Faber, 1956). Cf. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 103-125, for an overview of the roots in earlier historiography of her theories.

[216] Cf. Carlo Ginzburg, 'Deciphering the Sabbath', in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Center and Peripheries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Hennigsen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 121-137, especially 131.

busters we just mentioned. In this respect, the efforts to stamp out sorcery can be regarded as a massive campaign to conclude the christianisation of the European countryside, where Christianity in many cases had never been more than a thin veneer for all kinds of folk religion.[217] In areas on the periphery, moreover, such as the Baltic or Iceland, surviving pagan religious specialists were occasionally prosecuted and executed as witches.[218] Yet there are no convincing indications that the majority of the people persecuted as witches were less (or more) Christian than their neighbours.

There is still less evidence for the existence of a secret organisation of witches worshipping Satan – this at least may be clear by now. While elements from folklore were present, the early modern stereotype of the witch was primarily an amalgam and culmination of the earlier stereotyping of the religious other. The defilement of the host and killing of babies ascribed to both heretics and Jews, the incestuous orgies and perverse sex rites, the worship of demons with obscene gestures and the accompanying denial of Christianity, the magic potions that remove all memory of the Christian faith – all are present here. This catalogue of alleged blasphemy reached a new apogee in the sexual contact witches were said to have with Satan or his demons. A dramatic re-enacting of the original sin of the fallen angels in apocryphal scripture, this supernatural sex was believed to be an experience of such intensity that the participants – in the words of Inquisitor Jacquerius – 'one or two days afterwards are still exhausted and bodily worn out'.[219] Eventually, the Witches' Sabbath evolved into the realm of the other *per se*, a fantasy of total deviance where everything was the reverse of what was customary in normal society: people danced backwards or back-to-back, ate inedible or rotten things, perpetrated sodomy and other 'unnatural' sex acts, caressed abhorred animals as pets, and venerated Satan instead of the Christian god.[220] These improbable occurrences, it might be superfluous to add, were a strictly imaginary construct of a society that had become obsessed with the struggle to liberate itself from supernatural sources of misfortune. In fact, it can be argued that it was precisely the fact that it had *no basis* in reality that made the idea of the witches' conspiracy so potentially virulent. If nobody really was a Satanist witch, anybody *could* be.

black magic, and the black Mass[221]

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[217] Muchembled, *History of the Devil*, 35. Cf. Ankarloo, 'Introduction,' 13; his description of the Church's demonology as 'the other side of the missionary message' seems to me particular well chosen.

[218] See for instance Juhan Kahk, 'Estonia II: The Crusade against Idolatry,' in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Center and Peripheries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Hennigsen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 273-284; Antero Heikkinen and Timo Kervinen, 'Finland: The Male Domination,' ibidem, 319-338; and Kirsten Hastrup, 'Iceland: Sorcerers and Paganism,' ibidem, 383-401. In the case of the Swedish Saami, it was precisely the equation of paganism with sorcery that seemed to have spared them for witchcraft persecutions. Saami were frequently employed by Swedish farmers as magical specialists, and their reputation in this profession was such that local authorities seldom dared to prosecute them for sorcery. Cf. Gunlög Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins: Cultural Encounters in New Sweden and Lapland* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 85.

[219] Jaquerius, *Flagellum Haereticorum Fascinariorum*, 36. For medieval ideas about Satan and demons, see Peter Dinzelbacher, 'Die Realität des Teufels im Mittelalter,' in *Der Hexenhammer: Entstehung und Umfeld des Malleus maleficarum von 1487*, ed. Peter Segl (Köln: Böhlau, 1988), 151-175.

[220] Robert Lowland, ''Fantasticall and Devilishe Persons': European Witch-beliefs in Comparative Perspective,' in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Center and Peripheries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Hennigsen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 161-190, especially 166; Richard van Dülmen, 'Imaginationen des Teuflischen. Nächtliche Zusammenkunfte, Hexentänze, Teufelssabbate,' in *Hexenwelten: Magie und Imagination*, ed. Richard van Dülmen (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1987), 94-130. The 'reversed' nature of the Sabbat is illustrated in a particularly vivid way by the seventeenth-century demonologist Pierre de Lancre in his *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et démons, où il est amplement tracté des Sorciers, & de la Sorcellerie* (Paris: Nicolas Buon, 1613); see particularly the 'Advertissement'. Further contemporary accounts of the Sabbat, along with a German translation, can be found in Zacharias, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe*, 56-62, 61-82, 95-96.

When witchcraft is mentioned, the words 'black magic' automatically appear as a correlate in many people's minds. Like witchcraft, moreover, 'black magic' is frequently used as a synonym for Satanism. It thus seems apt to devote a few words to the historical phenomenon of 'black magic' in this chapter, as well as to that other legendary constituent of the Satanist myth, the 'black Mass'.

Before proceeding to do so, however, a first and inevitable step must be to establish what we exactly are talking about. Magic is a widely used and much abused term that can have different significances in different contexts. In anthropology and religious studies, it is sometimes used as a generic term for practices dealing with the supernatural that are considered not to form a legitimate part of religion or to constitute a separate subcategory. The validity of this division has been much debated.[222] This discussion, although not without relevance for our subject, will be ignored here for the moment. Instead, we will concentrate on the specific complex of magical practices that most readily came to be identified as 'black magic' in the history of the Christian West. Originally, the black arts were referred to as necromancy, 'consulting the dead'. The dead gradually became spirits in general, and after the rise of Christianity, these spirits were generally considered to be of a demonic kind. During this process, scribal error or pious intent corrupted the label necromancy into nigromancy, 'the black art'.[223] This medieval and early modern 'nigromancy' generally belonged to the category of magic that contemporary historians of magic have called ritual or ceremonial: magical practices making use of 'long and complex rituals for obtaining a variety of different kinds of benefits to the operator through the conjuring of spirits'.[224] Thus it can be distinguished from the spells, charms, and folk magic that also formed a common feature of the religious landscape of pre- and early modern Europe; its very complexity made it a genre that was closely linked with written or printed texts and literacy. This distinction is sometimes reflected in contemporary texts as well: the *Malleus Maleficarum*, for instance, clearly distinguishes between the necromantic magic that is the domain of the learned, and sorcery which 'is not performed with books or by the learned but by the altogether ignorant'.[225] It is safe to say, however, that the demarcation between 'folkloric' and negromantic magical

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[221] Scholarship on the history of medieval and early modern 'black arts' is still in a pioneering phase. For this section, I have mainly relied on the two books by Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, and *Forbidden Rites: A necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), as well as on the articles and texts in *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, ed. Claire Fanger. Magic in History, no. 4 (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 1998). Still useful as well is the classic book by Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science during the First Thirteen Centuries of our Era* (1932; reprint, New York: Columbia University Press, 1964). For the evolution of Roman Catholic views on magic during the Middle Ages, Boureau, *Satan the Heretic*, again proved valuable.

On the subject of the black mass, serious historiography is even scarcer. Henry T. F. Rhodes, *The Satanic Mass: A Sociological & Crimonological Study* (London: Rider, 1955) is still often quoted as an authoritative work on the matter, but the scholarship in this book is seriously outdated and inaccurate. Massimo Introvigne gives much information on this legendary ritual strewn through the pages of his *Enquête sur le Satanisme*; however, I disagree with his assertions on several important points, as will be made clear presently. The best introduction on the subject might be the eight-page appendix Gareth J. Medway devotes to the Black Mass in *Lure of the Sinister*, 380-388; his conclusions here are largely congruent with those that I have reached in this section.

[222] On this discussion, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 79-85. Hanegraaff himself dismisses the juxtaposition of magic and religion, concurring instead with the views expressed on this subject by the Dutch scholar of religions J. van Baal (see the latter's 'Magic as a Religious Phenomenon,' *Higher Education and Research in the Netherlands* 7 (1963): 3-4, 10-21).

[223] Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 152.

[224] Claire Fanger, 'Medieval Ritual Magic: What It is and Why We Need to Know More About It,' in *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, ed. Claire Fanger. Magic in History, no. 4 (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 1998), vii-xviii, there vi.

[225] Institoris, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 2:225 [II, Introd. Qu.].

practices was far from watertight in real life. Nor was it given much heed by the theologians and demonologists that formulated the policy of the Roman Catholic Church in these matters. As we have already seen, Jews, pagans, and dissident Christians were frequently accused of sorcery and demonic magic. Complementary to this, Pope John XII declared negromantic magic heresy in 1326, arguing that it implied an alliance with and worship of Satan.[226] The pope's doctrinal decision was prompted by fears that attempts on his life had been prepared by practitioners of sorcery operating on the papal court. As noted above, this official condemnation played a significant role in the legal and ideological preamble to the witch persecutions.

Pope John's negative appraisal of magic had long roots in Christian and pre-Christian history. Already in the Early Church, the magic arts were considered to be incompatible with Christianity. The Acts of the Apostles told how the people of Ephesus burnt their books of the 'curious arts,' worth fifty thousand pieces of silver, after Paul preached the Gospel in their city (Acts 19, 19); apocryphal stories related how the apostle Peter had undone his adversary Simon the Magician.[227] From the Late Antique period on, legends associating magic with Satan proliferated. One of the earliest examples of this genre that have come down to us is the so-called Proterius legend, recorded in the *Life of Basilius* and attributed to Amphilochius of Cappadocia. It recounts how a young slave of the Christian senator Proterius becomes hopelessly enamoured of the daughter of his master. Despairing of his love, he turns to 'one of the detested magicians' for help. This 'true poisoner' asks him if he is prepared to abrogate Christ in writing; and when the young man confirms, he dictates a written declaration to him stating that he abjures the Christian religion and wants to join the company of the devil. He then instructs him to go to 'some pagan monument' at nighttime and invoke the devil, holding the written abjuration in the air. Demons duly appear and lead the young slave to the devil. The father of iniquity initially receives him with suspicion – there are so many Christians, he says, who come to the devil in time of need but return to the mercy of Christ as soon as their wishes have been granted. He would like some security. Could the young man give him a written pact in which he abrogates Christ and his Christian baptism and declares himself to be with him for ever, even in the eternal torments that await him? Proterius' slave produces the pact he has prepared, which is accepted by the devil.[228]

After this, the demons ignite a violent passion for her father's servant in the senator's daughter. The senator, who has pledged to make his daughter a nun, opposes their love, but the girl laments her fate with such vehemence that he eventually succumbs and agrees to their marriage. The girl and her spouse enjoy a period of married bliss. Yet after a while, people in her environment start to voice suspicions regarding her new husband. Why does he so seldom go to church? And why does he never take communion? Is he *really* a Christian? The girl confronts the servant with these suspicions, and upon her persistent implorations, he confesses his pact with the devil.

Now Basilius enters the scene. The servant flees to him for help. Basilius asks him if he wants to convert to 'the Lord our God'; the young man answers that he would like to do so, but cannot. 'I have abrogated Christ in writing & have made a covenant with the devil.'[229]

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[226] Cf. Boureau, *Satan the Heretic*, in particular 14-15, 54-67.

[227] See Hagit Amirav, 'The Application of Magical Formulas of Invocation in Christian Contexts,' in *Demons and the Devil in Ancient and Medieval Christianity*, ed. Nienke Vos and Willemien Otten. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae: Texts and Studies of Early Christian Life and Language, no. 108 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 117-127, who extensively discusses this passage and also highlights magical elements within early Christianity itself.

[228] I have consulted Amphiliochos of Cappadocia's *Life of Basilius* in the Latin translation from Herbert Rosweyde, *Vitae Patrum: De Vita et Verbis Seniorvm sive Historiæ Eremiticæ Libri X. Avctoribus fuis et Nitori pristino restituti, ac Notationibvs illustrati, Operâ et studio Heriberti Ros-Weydi Vltraiectini, e Soc. Iesu Theologi* (Antverpiæ: Ex officina Platiniana, 1628), 156.

[229] Rosweyde, *Vitae Patrum*, 157.

Basilius however urges him to trust in the benignity of the Lord, and starts to pray. A prayer battle between the saint and the demons occurs, in which the whole congregation participates with supplications and Kyrie Eleisons, while the demons try to rip the servant away from Basilius' grasp. In the end, of course, Basilius is victorious, and out of the sky a piece of paper floats into the hands of the Christian saint. The young slave at once recognizes this as the pact he made with Satan. The piece of paper is ceremoniously burnt and Proterius' daughter can turn homewards with her husband saved.
Pact legends, as stories of this type are commonly called, would remain hugely popular in Western Europe during the next thousand years.[230] A similar tale about a priest called Theophilus would become one of the most-cited stories from the Middle Ages, while the Renaissance would produce its own variant in the Faust Legend, immortalized much later by Goethe.[231] In all these renderings, the basic theme remained the same: a man or a woman taking recourse to demonic magic ends up selling his soul to Satan, who in due course appears to exact his price. The view on magic contained in these legends and hagiographies correlated with that which was formulated in theology. The great Scholastic Thomas Aquinas considered all magic in which invocations or offerings to demons took place to be an explicit or manifest pact with the devil. The offerings, he maintained, were a diabolical mirroring of the Christian sacraments, thus constituting an alternative, Satanic form of religion. Magic by use of secret signs or mysterious spells purported to a tacit or implicit pact with the devil. After all, in taking recourse to these, the practitioner of magic did not place his trust in the omnipotent god of Christianity, but gave proof of his conviction that there was some other source of succour in the world. This pertained to heresy and meant in fact that the person was making a pact with the other side, that of the devil.[232] Thomas, it must be said, left some possibility for forms of 'natural', 'neutral' magic; and it must be remembered that the medieval and occult category of the magical did not correspond exactly with what we currently consider as the occult or the paranormal – things like the special properties of stones and astrology, for instance, were often seen as just another form of natural science. Yet prominent theologians like Augustinus of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas solidly associated demonic magic with the worship of Satan. This would become the dominant doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church and resulted in many a magician being sent to the stake.[233]

What the practitioners of magic themselves thought of all this is seldom brought down to us. A glimpse of their opinions might possibly be deduced from a preface contained in some copies of the *Liber juratus*, a well-known medieval handbook on necromantic magic also known as the *Liber Sacer* or *Sworn Book of Honorius*.[234] Referring to the ecclesiastical

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[230] An overview can be found in Frick, *Satan und Die Satanisten* 2:52-81, and Michael Siefener, 'Der Teufel als Vertragspartner,' *@KIH-eSkript: Interdisziplinäre Hexenforschung online* 3 (2011) 1:61-68, at http://www.historicum.net/no_cache/persistent/artikel/9105/ (accessed 14 January 2012). Medway, *Lure of the Sinister*, 58, suggests that the idea of the pact could have derived from oaths to the pagan gods, which were sometimes also written out on parchment.
[231] On the profilation and original text places of the Theophilus story, see Geroge Webbe Dasent, *Theophilus in Icelandic, Low German and other tongues: From M.S.S. in The Royal library, Stockholm* (London, William Pickering, 1895).
[232] Boureau, *Satan the Heretic*, 68-92. The views of Thomas Aquinas on magic can be found, among other places, in his *Summa Theologica*, 2, 2.95.3, as well as in his *Commentary on Pronouncements*, 2,7. Aquinas partly based his views on similar ideas by Augustinus of Hippo; see the latter's *Christian Doctrine*, 2.19-21 and 2.23.
[233] Robert Mathiesen, 'A Thirteenth-Century Ritual to Attain the Beatific Vision from the *Sworn Book* of Honorius of Thebes,' in *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, ed. Claire Fanger. Magic in History, no. 4 (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 143-162, there 147; Russell, *Lucifer*, 80-84, 293.
[234] Thorndike, *History of Magic*, 2:283-285; Mathiesen, 'A Thirteenth-Century Ritual to Attain the Beatific Vision'; Richard Kiekhefer, 'The Devil's Contemplatives: The Liber Iuratus, the Liber Visionum and the

condemnation of magic, the preface states that the pope and his cardinals seek to eradicate magic because they are under the influence of evil spirits themselves. Magicians and necromancers, the prelates claim, sacrifice unto demons, forsake their baptism, follow the pomps and works of Satan, and drag ignorant people down to damnation by their illusions. The anonymous author of the preface emphatically denies these charges as being inspired by the devil, who wishes to keep a monopoly on such marvels. It is impossible for a wicked or impure man to work truly by the magic art, in which the spirits are compelled against their will by pure men. True magic thus is the exact reverse of Satanism: the subjection *of*, not the subjection *to*, Satan. The preface goes on to say that the magicians had been forewarned by their art of the measures planned against them. After some hesitation however, they decided not to summon the demons to their aid, lest these might avail themselves of the opportunity to destroy the human population altogether. Instead, an assembly of 811 masters from Naples, Athens, and Toledo chose Honorius, a master of Thebes, to reduce their magic books to one volume containing 93 chapters, which could be more readily concealed and preserved. This book is none other than the *Liber Juratus* itself.[235]

While the preface to the *Liber juratus* is unique in its explicit justification of magical art and radical oppositional stance towards the religious authorities, the line of reasoning it contains makes it appearance in other places as well, for instance, in the late medieval Dutch miracle play *Mariken van Nieumeghen*. When Mariken, in dire straits, calls to the devil for help, he appears to her in the form of a one-eyed man and offers to teach her any art she wants. Mariken immediately asks to learn 'nigremansie', 'that pleasant art' by which she has witnessed her uncle the priest doing such wondrous things. The devil, however, quickly talks her out of this. 'Could she perform necromancy,' he muses to himself, 'It would just be to force me to do whatever would suit her.'[236] Meanwhile, the fact that Mariken's uncle avidly practices magic from 'eenen boeck' does nothing to detract from his piety: through his constant prayer, the 'holy father' eventually saves Mariken from the dark fiend.

So who was right, the magician of the *Liber Juratus*, or the Roman Catholic Church? The answer might well be: neither of the two. If we disregard angelic magic – equally condemned by the church – and concentrate on magical practices that explicitly invoke the demonic, the picture of the magician as a noble and virtuous seeker of wisdom is not borne out.[237] The *Liber Juratus* is exceptional in this matter because the first part of the book consists of a ritual to obtain the beatific vision through a long series of sometimes rather exotic prayers – this was precisely the reason, it has been suggested, that the book was considered one of the most abject of its kind by ecclesiastical dignitaries.[238] Yet the other chapters of the book are taken up with 'operations' that are neither particularly noble nor virtuous, but eminently practical: rituals to obtain secret knowledge, to discover hidden treasures, to gain favour with influential

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Christian Appropriation of Jewish Occultism,' in *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, ed. Claire Fanger. Magic in History, no. 4 (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 250-265. Mathiesen, ibidem, 145-147, dates the *Liber Juratus* to the thirteenth century, probably during the pontificate of Gregory IX, while Thorndike, Cohn, and Kiekhefer assign it to the fourteenth century.

[235] Mathiesen, 'A Thirteenth-Century Ritual to Attain the Beatific Vision,' 147-150; Thorndike, *History of Magic*, 283-285.

[236] *Mariken van Nieumegen*, 73-74 [lines 254-256]: 'Cost si nighermancie […], tware om mi te bedwinghen alst haer paste'. A medieval English edition of this play was republished in 1932: Harry Morgan Ayres and Adriaan Jacob Barnouw (eds.), *Mary of Nimmegen: A Facsimile Reproduction of the Copy of the English Version in the Huntington Library* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1932). For a modern English translation, see E. Colledge, *Mediaeval Netherlands religious literature* (Leiden: Sythoff, 1965).

[237] For a specimen of angelic magic, see Nicholas Watson, 'John the Monk's *Book of Visions of The Blessed and Undefiled Virgin Mary, Mother of God*: Two Versions of a Newly Discovered Ritual Magic Text,' in *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, ed. Claire Fanger. Magic in History, no. 4 (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 163-249.

[238] Mathiesen, 'A Thirteenth-Century Ritual to Attain the Beatific Vision,' 158.

people, to have a girl fall in love with the operator or make her dance in the nude, and even rites to avenge injuries or to harm enemies, practices which could be considered to venture close to the domain of maleficium.[239] This is also the picture presented by the other necromantic handbooks that have been left to us.[240] At the same time, however, the practices described do fit uneasily into the definition of Satanism adopted in this study. Demons are invoked, certainly, and occasionally even Satan himself. But this usually happens in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, often accompanied with a host of saints and archangels, or by force of the secret names of the sole god, which in best Jewish tradition were supposed to harbour great power over all of creation, the dark denizens of the pit included.[241] The closest thing to veneration of the devil that we can detect in these texts is the offerings that they sometimes prescribe the magician to make to the demons, mostly consisting of small animals such as chickens or doves.[242] The general picture the books of demonic magic offer, however, agrees roughly with that presented in the *Liber Juratus* and *Mariken van Nieumeghen*. Magic is used to restrain and bind the demons, not to venerate them.

Indeed, it has been pointed out that the incantations of the books of magic display a striking resemblance to the official Roman Catholic formulae for exorcism.[243] Just as the exorcist 'conjures' the demon in the name of Christ to leave the energumen – often after compelling him or her to disclose his true identity – so the necromancer forces the demon to do his chores for him: lifting treasures, obtaining knowledge, enticing women, harming enemies. The latter may be seen as simply an extension of the former. Nor should this continuum between liturgical practice and magical experiment surprise us unduly: strange as it may sound, most practitioners of demonic ritual magic probably belonged to the Roman Catholic clergy. The eminent expert Richard Kiekhefer even qualifies necromancy as a 'quintessentially clerical form of dark and daring entertainment' that was dominated by a lower clergy looking for thrills or extra income.[244] Although the leadership of the church might have seen their pastime as highly dangerous and deviant, adoration of Satan it was not. Judging by their books and their occupations, most medieval magicians probably saw themselves as ordinary or even devout Christians.[245]

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[239] Kieckhefer, 'Devil's contemplates,' 255.

[240] See particularly Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*; W. Braekman, *Magische experimenten en toverpraktijken uit een middelnederlands handschrift* (Gent: Seminarie voor Volkskunde, 1966); Juris G. Lidaka, '*The Book of Angels, Rings, Characters and Images of the Planets*: Attributed to Osbern Bokinham,' in *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, ed. Claire Fanger. Magic in History, no. 4 (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 32-63 – all of which contain complete transcriptions and/or translations of medieval necromantic texts.

[241] An instance of invoking Satan is cited from a fifteenth-century *grimoire* in Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, 276-286, and in Lidaka, '*The Book of Angels*,' 54-55. Later necromantic handbooks also confirm the picture sketched above: for instance, the anonymous *Grimoire du Pape Honorius, avec un recueil des plus rares secrets* (Rome [Lille]: Imprimerie Du Blocquel, 1760), which contains amidst much general piety a rather matter-of-fact conjuration of Lucifer 'par le Dieu vivant, par le Dieu vrai, par le Dieu saint par le Dieu qui a dit, et tout a été fait' (pp. 34-35). Norman Cohn was of a similar opinion – cf. his *Europe's Inner Demons*, 193 and 169: 'Nowhere, in the surviving books of magic, is there a hint of Satanism.'

[242] See for instance Lidaka, '*The Book of Angels*,' 54-55, 61-63.

[243] Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, 3.

[244] Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, 35, also 4.

[245] Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, 15, 26, 131, 157. Frank Klaassen, 'English Manuscripts of Magic, 1300-1500: A Preliminary Survey,' in *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, ed. Claire Fanger. Magic in History, no. 4 (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 3-31, there 20, cites a medieval magical manuscript which claims that Christians are better magicians than pagans and Jews because the operators of the latter groups 'are nott signed with the sign of god, that is to saye with the signe of the crosse therefore they spirites will nott answere them trewly…'

This may be an appropriate moment to devote a few words to that other phenomenon that is inextricably bound up with the lore and legend of Satanism and black magic: the so-called black Mass, or Missa Negra. In the *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, Massimo Introvigne defines the black mass as 'an "inverted" Roman Catholic Mass in which, by appropriately changing the formulae, Satan is worshiped and Jesus Christ is cursed'.[246] If we accept this definition, it might be clear by now that medieval and early modern necromancy is not the most obvious place to expect to find it. To demonstrate this point immediately: none of the surviving manuals on necromantic magic – and we have quite a few – contain anything even faintly resembling a black mass. What is certainly true is that the host and the eucharistic ritual are the object of a great deal of intense attention in both learned and folk magic. Realist views about the host being the embodiment of god on earth 'in its essence' had gained ascendancy early in the history of the Church and had been codified by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Consequently, miraculous powers were thought to pertain to both the eucharist and the ceremony of consecration; and this belief was sometimes translated into practical forms that had not been intended by the learned doctors of the church.[247] Substances laid upon the altar or under the host when consecration took place were believed to share in the divine radiance surrounding this powerful rite. The custom of placing herbs on the altar on certain feast days to enhance their medical properties may go back to the sixth century.[248] Similar practical applications of eucharistic devotion can be found in magical practices. A late-fifteenth century magical manual, for example, records a recipe for becoming invisible that requires the tongue of a raven and the tongue of a kite over which nine Masses have been read.[249] In fact, the necromantic manuals themselves were often required to be consecrated to render them more efficacious.[250] These practices evidently have nothing to do with 'inverted' liturgy or blasphemy. Rather they attest to an intense awe for the power that the divine presence in the eucharist was presumed to have. For magician and ordinary believer alike, magical practice and Christian religion may in many cases have been perceived as a continuum. This could, by the way, also apply the other way around. Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, a famous Renaissance proponent of natural magic, described the Mass itself as a form of magic, in which a specific ritual conjures the divine to appear in bread and wine.[251]

Notwithstanding all this, forms of inverted liturgy were not unknown in the Middle Ages. In some churches, carnivalesque parodies of normal religious services were performed each year on New Year's Eve. Priests and clergy would dress up, dance, sing scurrilous songs, play at celebrating Mass, incense the building with fetid fumes from an old shoe, jump around, and make obscene gestures and jokes. Although this behaviour was greatly deplored by the Paris Faculty of Theology, to whose indignation we owe much of our knowledge of these revelries,

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[246] Introvigne, 'Satanism', 1035. It must be pointed out that there is also a Roman Catholic liturgy called Missa Negra, which is a private Mass for a deceased person, with the ministering priest wearing black vestments. It is seldom celebrated and obviously must not be confused with the other type of Missa Negra we are discussing here (see Elliot Rose, *A Razor for a Goat: A Discussion of Certain Problems in the History of Witchcraft and Diabolism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 35).

[247] Piero Camporesi, 'The Consecrated Host: A Wondrous Excess', in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. Michel Feher (New York: Urzone, 1990) 1:220-237.

[248] Braekman, *Magische experimenten en toverpraktijken*, 14. Similar practices are mentioned in Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 58; Robert Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers en France au XVIIe siècle: Une analyse de psychologie historique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980), 497; and Dieter Harmening. *Superstitio: Überlieferungs- und theoriegeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur kirchlich-theologische Aberglaubensliteratur des Mittelalters* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1979), 22-24.

[249] Braekman, *Magische experimenten en toverpraktijken*, 14-15.

[250] Kieckhefer, 'Devil's contemplates,' 261.

[251] Cf. D.P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1958), 90-95, 151.

nowhere it is suggested that this parody of liturgy encompasses the abrogation of Jesus and the adoration of Satan.[252] For the real origin of the black Mass, we have to look to a by now already familiar domain: that of imaginary constructs regarding the religious other. Accusations of desecration of the host were a continuing refrain in the litany of horrors recited about the religiously divergent in society. We have already encountered numerous examples of this, such as the Luciferians of Pope Gregorius IX, who were believed to keep the holy bread in their toilets so they could defecate on it. Stories like this functioned as corroborative evidence for the dogma of transubstantiation promulgated by the Fourth Lateran Council and experienced a revival when protestant Christians started to contest sacramental realism after the Reformation.[253] Groups that did not have the least interest in the corporal manifestations of Jesus, like the Jews, or did not hold Roman Catholic views about transubstantiation, like some heretics, were nevertheless assumed to foster an intensely malicious interest in the Body of Christ. The same views were held about witches.[254] The most common way the enemies of the faith were supposed to maltreat the Sacrament was by trampling it or spitting on it, but more creative methods for desecration were also recorded. In 1643, Madeleine Bavent, a nun who claimed to be possessed by demons, maintained that her confessors had used the host as a penis-ring while enjoying her sexually, with further picturesque detail being added by the other nuns, who declared that this had happened in church, on the altar.[255]

These fantasies about the desecration of the host could easily be elaborated to produce more intricate travesties of liturgy. We have already noted the allegations against Manichean and Gnostic Christians, who were said to celebrate a perverse form of eucharist in which they partook of each other's sexual fluids. In the fourteenth century, the elusive Luciferians were believed to baptize their children in the name of Lucifer and pray diabolic parodies of the paternoster. It was the Witches' Sabbath, however, that proved to be the most fertile playground for such fantasies. In the descriptions of this phantasmagorial realm of inversion supplied by the reports of judges, the treatises of demonologists, and the confessions of exorcised nuns, the contours of a veritable anti-liturgy become visible. Thus we can read of parodies of the Mass with black candles and a black host in a black chalice; of aspersions using the Devil's or witches' urine instead of holy water; of a Satanic book of liturgy bound in black leather; even of Satan preaching like a priest on the virtues of vice.[256] Louis Gaufridy, the French priest accused of sorcery in 1610, even claimed to remember how during the Sabbath 'they consecrated the body of Our Lord in honour of Lucifer'.[257] If we want to find the first rough outlines of the blaspheming pseudoliturgy that would later be called the black Mass, it is here we must go looking.[258]

The black mass thus originated, like the concept of Satanism in general, as a construct of attribution. If it was ever actually celebrated in the medieval or early modern period is a

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[252] The description of the Paris Faculty of Theology, dating from 1444, can be found in J. P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Paris: Siroune, 1800-1875), Series Latina 207:1169-1176; see especially 207:1171. A fragment of the text in German translation can be found in Zacharias, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe*, 45-46.

[253] Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 168-169. There are some historical cases in which Anabaptist Christians trampled or dispersed the host, the adoration of which they considered as demonic idolatry.

[254] Institoris, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 117. See also translator Montague Summers on this subject in his introduction, xxvi.

[255] Madeleine Bavent, *The Confessions of Madeleine Bavent*, transl. Montague Summers (London: The Fortune Press, 1933,), 18, 48-49, 103-104.

[256] Cf. for instance Robert Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle: Textes inédits* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1979), 24-25; Rhodes, *The Satanic Mass*, 61-63. According to Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers*, 79, 'tout sabbat […] comporte quelque cérémonie de messe inversée'.

[257] Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers*, 202. Lancre, *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges*, 'Advertissement', also mentions priests who were accused of having said Mass at the Sabbat.

[258] Medway, *Lure of the Sinister*, 380-388, is of the same opinion.

matter that is open to dispute. We will take a closer look at one possible instance of such an event in the next section. Despite the assertions of some historians to the contrary, however, I am not familiar with any positive indication that a true black Mass according to the definition of Introvigne was ever performed before the onset of modernity.[259]

the Affair of the Poisons[260]

While it is clear that demonic magic does not equate with Satanism, it is equally clear that practices of necromancy take us into the shady back lanes of the 'City of God', close to where the nightclubs of the Beast begin. Even for the modern historian of religions, for instance, the notion of making small offerings to the demons invites the interpretation that they function as deities, however minor and subsidiary. We are entering a grey area here, where the dividing line between Christianity and Satanism is not so clear-cut as the textbook definitions of theologians or historians might suggest it is.

This becomes especially clear when we consider the best-known instance of possible early modern Satanism, the so-called 'affaire des poisons' (Affair of the Poisons). This scandal came into the open in 1679, after a Paris soothsayer indiscreetly bragged about the profits she was making from poisoning people on behalf of her clients. This reached the ear of Nicolas de la Reynie, the Parisian Chief of Police, and his subsequent inquiries brought to light a vast commercial network of occult entrepreneurs in the city, allegedly counting a considerable number of people of rank among its clientele. What was worse, suggestions were put forward that a plot had been brewed in this underground circuit to assassinate the king of France using poison and magic (two things that tended to blend into each other for most contemporaries).[261] Apparently thoroughly alarmed by the disclosures of his chief of police, Louis XIV, the reigning French King, installed a special inquisitorial and judicial court of justice on 7 April 1679. It was soon nicknamed *Chambre Ardente*, in ominous reference to the special tribunal for cases of heresy which in the sixteenth century had convened at the Arsenal, in a room hung with black cloth and lit with torches.[262]

The new *Chambre Ardente* brought some colourful subjects before the bar. Among them the divineress 'La Trianon', who had a human skeleton hanging from the ceiling in her consulting room (according to her own statement as a memento mori and to 'find out how many bones a human creature possessed'), and Catherine Montvoisin, known as 'La Voisin', a beautician,

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[259] Among these historians we find Rhodes, *Satanic Mass*, 15, 51-57. Rhodes' book is not striking for its critical appraisal of historical sources, however, and his claims about medieval Missae Negrae are entirely based on the work of the nineteenth-century French historian Jules Michelet, whose creative reconstruction of history is discussed more fully in the next chapter. Rose, *A Razor for a Goat*, 160-170, propounds the theory that wandering scholars during the High Middle Ages took over surviving nuclei of paganism and introduced the black mass 'as an improvement', organizing their followers in covens 'partly in mockery' of the model of the friars. This is also supposed to be the origin of the witch cult. Unfortunately this interesting hypothesis is presented without a shred of evidence. The opinions of Massimo Introvigne and Karl Frick on this subject are discussed more extensively in the next section.

[260] For the historical facts concerning the Affair of the Poisons, I have relied primarily on the excellent book by Anne Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons: Murder, Infanticide and Satanism at the Court of Louis XIV* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), one of the few scholarly monographs available on the subject. Additional information was derived from Anton Kippenberg, *Die Sage vom Herzog von Luxemburg und die historische Persönlichkeit ihres Trägers* (1901; reprint, Niederwalluf bei Wiesbaden: Dr. Martin Sändig oHG, 1970), and Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers*, 466-472. The interrogation records that serve as our main source for the affair have been published in Volumes Six and Seven of *Archives de la Bastille*, ed. François Ravaisson. 19 vols. (Paris: A. Durand & Pedone-Lauriel, 1866-1904).

[261] On the difficulty during the early modern period of drawing a demarcation between 'natural' poisoning and poisonous magic, see Giovanna Fiume, 'The Old Vinegar Lady, or the Judicial Modernization of the Crime of Witchcraft,' in *History from Crime*, ed. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero. Selections from *Quaderni Storici*, no. 3 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994), 65-87.

[262] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 151.

soothsayer, and abortionist.[263] La Voisin was to play an important role in the erupting scandal. A bevy of smaller occultist entrepreneurs surrounded this intrepid woman, including several Roman Catholic priests who were prepared to employ their sacerdotal powers in dubious ways to generate extra income. The most squalid of these was probably Étienne Guibourg, a hideous, squinting man of seventy who had been living with a concubine for the previous twenty years and had fathered several children by her. La Voisin's practice had reputedly been frequented by some high-ranking clients, and as the gallery of rogues employed by it was brought in for questioning, allegations soon started to touch Versailles' highest circles. To their dismay, several members of the aristocracy found themselves summoned to appear before the tribunal, including one of France's foremost generals, the Maréchal de Luxembourg, who was accused of attempts to invocate the devil by an obscure adventurer-cum-magician-cum-astrologer called Lesage.[264]

Luxembourg's presumed dealings with the devil were only the tip of the iceberg of demonic traffic that was described by the arrested caterers of magic to their interrogators. La Voisin and her circle in particular seemed to have been involved in lurid practices that closely resembled diabolism, at least according to the declarations of some witnesses. It is these practices, of course, which make the Affair of the Poisons so interesting for the historian of Satanism. We are in the particularly fortunate circumstance that the original interrogation records have survived, enabling us to trace in detail how notions about sacrilegious rituals of demonic magic arose during the judicial investigation. Because of the exceeding interest of these matters for our subject, we give a brief chronological overview here.

On 18 November 1679, while being interrogated in the royal prison of Château Vincennes, Martine Bergerot, 'one of the most famous palmists of Paris', declared that she had been approached by a woman called Filastre to ask if she would be interested in making her fortune by selling herself to Satan. Filastre had done so herself, and read to Bergerot from a pact on parchment, in which she gave herself body and soul to the devil; in return, she would receive the ability 'to bring death or harm on anyone she liked', as well as the power to fulfil the requests listed in the pact of 'several persons of quality'.[265]

On 28 November 1679, Lesage (the same character who got the Maréchal de Luxembourg in trouble) made several highly incriminating statements regarding La Voisin and a priest of her circle called Davot. The latter, he maintained, had performed Mass on the abdomen of a girl or a woman 'whose name he [Lesage] might remember later on'; this had occured in the house where La Voisin plied her trade. In addition, Davot had copulated with the anonymous girl or woman, and had kissed her 'shameful parts' while saying mass. The priests had frequently celebrated Mass clandestinely at La Voisin's.[266]

On 26 May 1680, La Filastre described how she had given birth to her lover's child in a circle of burning candles while reciting incantations renouncing the holy sacrament and her own baptism. Afterwards, the child had been taken away, she feared to be offered to the devil. She also told how her own pact with the devil had been ratified by a priest called Cotton, who had said Mass to this purpose, during which he invoked 'the three princes of demons' with unintelligible words. As had already been suggested in the earlier declaration of Bergerot, Filastre had agreed to give herself to the devil on behalf of third parties as well, so she could fulfil the demands of 'all the others'.[267]

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[263] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 5:373.

[264] Kippenberg, *Die Sage vom Herzog von Luxemburg*, 63-64. Luxembourg had been implicated earlier by a woman named Marie Bosse, a soothsayer who was burned on 10 May 1679 (with her daughter of fourteen being forced to witness the spectacle, presumably on educational grounds) – see Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 160.

[265] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:46-47; Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 243.

[266] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:56-57, Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 194.

[267] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:211-213.

The priest, Jacques-Joseph Cotton, when brought into custody, only admitted that he had put 'figures' to bring about love or death under the chalice for the wine during Mass in church, and that he had once said Mass over an afterbirth (presumably so that it could be used in magic). He more or less stuck with his story till the end, only adding further details regarding the procedure he followed: La Filastre would give him a piece of paper with the demands to be made to the devil, as well as a conjuration; Mass was read over this for nine days 'in order to make the spirit appear by the tangible presence of Our Lord'.[268]

Meanwhile, La Voisin had already been burnt on the stake. Yet her twenty-one-year-old daughter, Marie Marguerite Montvoisin, was brought in for questioning as well, and she blew the whistle on Étienne Guibourg, the old priest. Together with the indefatigable Lesage, they initiated a series of divulgations that were even more sensational than those which had been disclosed before.

On 26 June 1680, Guibourg said he had celebrated Mass once on the abdomen of a woman, in the chapel of an unknown castle; on a later occasion, he performed a similar ceremony in a hovel in Saint-Denis on the body of another unknown woman, who he thought to be a prostitute.[269] On 15 July, Lesage added further elaborations: in 1660, twenty years earlier, Guibourg had said several Masses over women, 'all completely nude, without chemise, on a table that served as altar; having their arms spread, they held a burning candle in each of them during the whole time the masses lasted'.[270] Three days later, he supplied more details on the case of Filastre as well: the woman had most certainly given her child to be 'killed in holocaust' as an offering to the devil; another child had been aborted as a sacrifice; in addition, a girl of fourteen or fifteen had been taken away outside Paris to be given to the devil as well, by a priest who had 'said three Masses over the abdomen of the girl, during one of which he had known her carnally'.[271]

On 20 August 1680, La Voisin's daughter confirmed Lesage's allegations concerning Guibourg and added new ones to them. Guibourg had said Mass 'on the abdomen, over ladies' several times at her mother's place; the first time, to her knowledge, some six years ago. At that time, her mother had only allowed her to arrange the mattresses and candles for the ritual; when she had become older, she had been permitted to witness 'that kind of Mass' and had seen how a naked woman had lain down naked on the mattress, 'her head hanging down, supported by a cushion on a reversed chair, her legs hanging down, a piece of cloth on her abdomen, with a cross on it at the place of the stomach and the chalice on it'.[272] Even more spectacularly, she disclosed that one of these naked women had been Madame de Montespan, the titular mistress of the king; she had come to La Voisin to have mass said over her some three years earlier, about ten in the evening, and had only left at midnight.[273]

Filastre next disclosed that the unknown woman who had been the altar piece during Guibourg's 'nude Mass' in Saint-Denis had also been none other than De Montespan. The old priest himself initially denied knowing anything about this; but later he remembered having performed four black masses on a naked lady he was given to understand was Madame de Montespan, her face hidden by a black veil.[274] On at least one occasion, a stranger had conducted him blindfolded to the place where the mass was held.[275]

More gruesome detail was added to the story by Marie Montvoisin. On 9 October 1680, she told her interrogators how the entrails of aborted children had been used in magical

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[268] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:220-221, 6:283-284.
[269] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:232; Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 246-247.
[270] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:252.
[271] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:258-259.
[272] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:294-295.
[273] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:294-295.
[274] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 264-271.
[275] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:327.

ceremonies; on one occasion, Guibourg had slit the throat of a child that had been born prematurely, 'pouring the blood in the chalice, and consecrating it with the host'.[276] Guibourg, this time, readily acknowledged the deed; on 10 October, he recounted how he had sacrificed the child over the abdomen of a woman, draining the baby with a 'canif' in the neck; during the rite, he had called upon the demons with the words: 'Astaroth, Asmodeus, princes of affection, I conjure you to accept the sacrifice that I present you of this child for the things that I demand of you'. Afterwards, the dead child had been brought to another room, where the entrails and heart were also taken out and offered in sacrifice.[277] He also disclosed how Mademoiselle des Œillets – a chambermaid of De Montespan, and a former bed partner of the King as well – had performed a peculiar ceremony with an anonymous but titled Englishman. She had provided a sample of her menstrual blood in a chalice in which the Englishman masturbated; bats' blood and flour were then added. The object of this concoction had been to kill the King.[278]

Meanwhile, Lesage confided that Guibourg had also been implicated in the sacrifice of Filastre's child, as well as in various other sacrifices to the devil of recently born children – the magician even maintained that the priest had once offered the body of a hanged man to the demons.[279] On 1 October, Filastre admitted under torture that she had handed over her child for diabolic sacrifice; she was executed later, although she retracted her admission in her final confession.[280]

After the final disclosures of Guibourg and Marie Montvoisin, minor suspects continued to reveal extra details. These amounted to little more than variations of the earlier stories – a Mass said over the nude bodies of a mother and daughter at the same time, for instance – and added no substantial information.[281] Eventually, the investigations were brought to a sudden halt, like an abruptly extinguished candle, and the Chambre Ardente was suspended. The tribunal had issued arrest warrants for a total of 319 persons, of whom 194 had been taken into custody. Of these, 104 had been tried; 36 had received death sentences.[282]

In the historiographical literature on Satanism, in so far as it can be said to exist, the Affair of the Poisons is commonly considered to be the first well-established case of Satanism.[283] Massimo Introvigne speaks of the affair as being 'construed on a solid base of historical facts': 'the documents kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale and in other Parisian libraries are from the hand of professional policemen who do not abandon themselves to fantasies'.[284] He does not doubt a veritable 'list of duchesses, countesses and marquises' attended the

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[276] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:333-334.

[277] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:335.

[278] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:336. The masturbating Englishman has been identified on rather doubtful grounds as George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. See Montague Summers in his introduction to Institoris, *Malleus Maleficarum*, xxii; Summers is followed by Rhodes, *The Satanic Mass*, 212.

[279] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:390.

[280] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:324; Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 301267.

[281] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 7:5.

[282] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 306. Two imprisoned suspects had already died under torture, while a few more died of other causes while in prison.

[283] Massimo Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 34, 38; Frick, *Satan und Die Satanisten*, 2:119-131; Zacharias, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe*, 123. Kippenberg, *Die Sage vom Herzog von Luxemburg*, 48-50, denies the complicity of Luxembourg, but seems to believe in the veracity of the black mass stories and the participation of De Montespan. Medway, *Lure of the Sinister*, 79, seems undecided. A whole host of more or less popular authors hold similar opinions, such as R. Lowe Thompson, *The History of the Devil: The Horned God of the West* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1929), 146; Martin Koomen, *Het ijzige zaad van de duivel: Geschiedenis van heksen en demone*n (Amsterdam: Wetenschappelijke Uitgeverij, 1973), 132-134, Wenisch, *Satanismus*, 22, to name just a few.

[284] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 35. The criminologist and self-styled black mass expert Henry T. F. Rhodes called La Reynie simply 'one of the great detectives of all time'; Rhodes, *The Satanic Mass*, 86.

alternative masses of La Voisin *cum suis*, and compares the case favourably with the earlier witchcraft persecutions and the famous French possession scandals at Loudon and Louviers.[285] With the Affair of the Poisons, Introvigne argues, we are not confronted with 'imaginary tales of pious sisters or overly zealous confessors': the investigation and prosecution were initiated in a 'completely non-religious context' and by 'secular police forces' rather than 'ecclesiastical authority'.[286]

Certainly it is vital to point out the historical context of the Affaire of the Poisons: a late-seventeenth-century Paris for which the early modern Witch Scare was already a thing of the past. The last witch burning in the French capital had occurred in 1625; and while witchcraft prosecutions continued in the rural provinces, the Paris *Parlement* invariably nullified the convictions for sorcery that had been issued by subordinate courts.[287] The reports of the investigations that are left to us, moreover, are strikingly devoid of the more colorful elements that featured prominently in the stereotype of the Satanist witch: diabolical apparitions, supernatural flight, nightly revels, demonic animals. We read of rituals held and invocations uttered, but the texts remain silent about how successful these actions were in achieving their intended magical effect. To the modern reader, this attitude feels comfortably familiar.

In some measure, however, this comfortable feeling of familiarity is deceptive. The contrast suggested by Introvigne between the clerical fanaticism that had dominated earlier decades, and the cool, rational police work during the Affair of the Poisons is in important ways a false one. It is based both on misconceptions about the witch trials and a mischaracterization of some of the principal players in the *Affaire des Poisons*. Far from being monopolized by clerical fanaticism, as we have seen, the witch trials had been in the main a secular affair, carried out and propagated by the educated people of the day. And the 'professional policeman' La Reynie stood more deeply in this tradition than some writers have cared to notice. It was not unusual for De La Reynie to ask defendants if they had seen the devil, and these questions were evidently based on real concern.[288] In one instance, he cited Jean Bodin, the well-known legal apologist of the reality of witchcraft, as an authority on the possibility of such supernatural incursions.[289] The British historian Anne Somerset is probably right when she states that 'residual fear of witchcraft' had been partly responsible for the scale and escalation of the affair.[290] One member of the Chambre Ardente bitterly complained that the tribunal seemed to occupy itself exclusively with accusations of sorcery, a crime long deemed defunct.[291]

Even more fundamental than De la Reynie's demonic preoccupations, however, is the fact that the legal mechanisms that were brought into play during the Affair were virtually identical to those used during the witchcraft trials. The nickname 'Chambre Ardente' for the royal committee in charge of the proceedings was well earned: in many aspects, its practices were reminiscent of earlier heresy persecutions. Torture and threats were freely applied to suspects of more humble social status. The distorted testimonies that may have been the result of this are easily imagined. With some of the principal suspects – Lesage, Guibourg, La Voisin's daughter – thumbscrews did not prove necessary. They seem to have sensed from early on what their interrogators expected to hear from them and how they could use this to their advantage. By carefully dosing their divulgences, and gradually revealing more and more spectacular 'secrets' that required further investigation, they were able to postpone their

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[285] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 37, 34.
[286] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 34-35.
[287] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 143; Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers*, 313-368.
[288] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 221. 'Yes, I have seen him, and he looked just like you,' the Duchesse de Bouillon was said to have answered De la Reynie, according to a probably apocryphal anecdote.
[289] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 249.
[290] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 144.
[291] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 229.

seemingly inevitable fate. This may explain the strange interplay that the depositions of these suspects sometimes seem to display, and the readiness of some to volunteer the most horrible facts. It was a desperate gamble to escape death by people who were used to earning their living through make-believe anyway.[292]

Both modern scholars and contemporary observers have remarked upon the fundamental unreliability of the evidence uncovered in this way. In the most thorough examination of the affair to date, Anne Somerset has thrown doubt upon the involvement of Madame de Montespan, as well as the existence of a plot to kill the king.[293] Her scathing analysis of the trustworthiness of some of the principal witnesses is confirmed by the utterances of prominent contemporaries.[294] In a memorandum to the king, the French Minister Colbert wrote that 'it is a common occurrence during the public investigations of magicians, soothsayers and suppliers of secrets, magic and poisons, that these wretched hawkers get the liberty and the opportunity to name whoever they like as their accomplices; because, while most of the time there is nothing solid against these persons, and while one finds almost never any hard and certain indications for these crimes which one can investigate more deeply but only mere talk, it is always very difficult to verify their calumnies. That is why these indefinite investigations have always been considered as most dangerous and adversary to the tranquillity of the people.'[295] Even De la Reynie, in a similar memorandum, was forced to admit that the testimony that was poured out by his prisoners could not be trusted, 'neither in its entirety nor in part', that the principal facts they had divulged were probably not true, and that there was 'no certitude whatsoever regarding what was true and what was false' in their assertions. He concluded, however, that it was nevertheless evident that 'impieties, sacrileges, and abominations are practiced, both in Paris, in the countryside, and in the provinces'. 'Should it be that these scoundrels, these monsters escape justice,' he asked rhetorically, 'Only because they have found it advisable to make such extraordinary assertions, to accuse people of quality, to talk about the king, to invent all these abominations?'[296]

The 'scoundrels' and 'monsters' that were staking their lives on their tall stories were not the only ones whose principal interests were not necessarily congruent with those of the truth. Unknown to them, and unknown perhaps to De la Reynie, bigger games were being played behind the scenes. Rather than consider it a late addendum to the Witch Scare, it may be more appropriate to place the Affair of the Poisons in the even older 'tradition' of court scandals involving sorcery. And like other court scandals involving scorcery, the Affair of the Poisons functioned as yet another episode in the ceaseless 'competition for power which surrounds the thrones of arbitrary rulers'.[297] Louvois (1641-1691), ruthless minister of the king and De la Reynie's direct superior, clearly had his own purposes with the Affair, among which the

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[292] A similar function of divulgations of alleged magical plots against royalty as 'a mean of negotiation' is not unknown from other historical instances; see particularly Sabina Loriga, 'A Secret to kill the King: Magic and Protection in Piedmont in the Early Eighteenth Century,' in *History from Crime*, ed. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero. Selections from *Quaderni Storici*, no. 3 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994), 88-109, there 95.

[293] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 319-302; see also her general conclusions on the Affair on pp. 326 and 339.

[294] Lesage is characterized by Somerset as 'a practised and polished liar who was accustomed to live on his wits' (*The Affair of the Poisons*, 174), Marie Marguerite Montvoisin 'relished being in the centre of attention' (ibidem, 252), Guibourg was probably on the brink of senility (ibidem, 247).

[295] 'Mémoire contre les faits calomnieux imputés à Madame de Montespan,' 415, cited in Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers*, 470.

[296] 'Mémoire de M. de La Reynie sur le fait touchant les abominations, le sacrifice de l'enfant pour la Des Œilletes et pour l'étranger prétendu milord anglais' [ca. Dec 1680]; Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:395-399.

[297] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 141. For a similar affair in early eighteenth-century Piedmont, see Loriga, 'A Secret to kill the King'.

political destruction of his former pal Luxembourg was prominent. It clearly follows from the records that he manipulated the evidence and suggested to witnesses that they might come off lightly if they told 'the whole truth' about their connections with Luxembourg and other people to whom he did not bear a kind heart.[298] His own estimation of the truth of their declarations and the unscrupulous way in which he had used them as his pawns are clear from a short note he wrote in 1683 regarding the astrologer Lesage, who had begun to boast of new 'secrets' he could unveil from his cell. 'You cannot be too harsh toward that rascal who, all the time he was at Vincennes, could never say a truthful word,' Louvois declared on this occasion to the director of the fortress of Besançon – despite the fact that this same 'rascal' had served as his principal incriminating witness against the Maréchal de Luxembourg.[299]

Behind Louvois appears the even more redoubtable figure of the French king. It was at his royal behest that a special committee of investigation had been installed shortly after the first indications of what was to become the Affair of the Poisons had been brought to light. It is hard to imagine that pious indignation had been his primary motivation in this. The court of the Sun King was not exactly a place associated with piety: indeed, it was probably one of the most libertine spots of its day.[300] The affair, however, fitted only too nicely into the king's tireless schemes to subdue his own nobility.[301] The Chambre Ardente had power of attorney to summon and judge even the highest members of the aristocracy, who normally held the privilege of being judged by their own peers. The insult was keenly felt by the nobility.[302]

Louis' plans backfired when the tribunal delved op 'facts' that touched his own intimate circle. It could not have pleased the king that the French and European public would be entertained with stories in which his official mistress featured as a naked altar to invoke demons and her maid of honour mixed her menstrual fluids with the ejaculation of an Englishman. This signified the end of the Chambre Ardente. As soon as the name of De Montespan popped up, Louis demanded that all official reports regarding the affair would henceforth would be directed to him personally, and to him alone. He took care to keep all sensitive documents concerning de Montespan under lock and key in his personal quarters and burnt them with his own hands in 1709. The only reason we know about them at all, in fact, is because De la Reynie, his zealous chief of police, had kept separate minutes of the proceedings, which were discovered two centuries later and published by Ravaisson in his enormous collection of records of the Bastille.

Similar reasons of discretion may have ensured that Lesage, Guibourg, Marie Montvoisin, and several lesser suspects were never subjected to a public trial, and consequently escaped the death penalty. Their gamble had worked, one might say – although their eventual fate was hardly better than execution, as they were put away in remote fortress dungeons until their deaths.[303] The Maréchal de Luxembourg, by the way, was 'released without being unambiguously absolved' after a few miserable months in the Bastille, to continue a prestigious military career. Stories about his pact with the Devil, however, circulated for the rest of his life and grew into a kind of Faust-like legend after his death.[304]

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[298] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:18-19; Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 186; Kippenberg, *Die Sage vom Herzog von Luxemburg*, 62, citing Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 5:501.

[299] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 324; Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 7:125 ('Louvois à M. De Moncault, commandant citadelle Besançon, Versailles 6 april 1683').

[300] Cf. Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 58-62.

[301] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 337-338.

[302] The Duchesse de Bouillon explicitly stated that she had no regard for the tribunal and had only appeared at its hearing out of respect for the King; Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 221.

[303] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 301.

[304] Kippenberg, *Die Sage vom Herzog von Luxemburg*, 67, citing Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:210. Particularly in German-speaking countries, the Maréchal was turned into a Faustlike figure of folklore. Kippenberg, ibidem, 93, 117ff, gives an extensive inventory of pamphlets dealing with Luxembourg's relations

So what can we conclude from all this? It may be evident by now that we cannot consider the historical material concerning the Affair of the Poisons as *a priori* more reliable than the trial reports that are left to us from the witchcraft prosecutions. The 'solid base of historical facts' some historians have perceived behind the affair turns out on closer inspection to be a quicksand of distortion and manipulation. Nevertheless, while we cannot be sure of the reality of the practices recounted by De la Reynie's suspects, we can still be sure that they disclose actual conceptions existing at the time about what Satanism and demonic magic were supposed to be. Moreover, some of the *modi operandi* they describe, as we shall see below, are confirmed by what we know from other sources regarding the practise of demonic magic. In this respect, the investigation records of the affair may provide us with intriguing glimpses from the inside of the magical subculture. Consequently, it might be worth our while to take a closer look at the source material.[305]

We begin our exploration with some descriptions of magic that we have no reason to doubt and that provide a good starting point for tracing the possible evolution of 'ordinary' necromancy into practices that were a great deal more deviant., All kind of minor personages who had on occasion dabbled with magic were dragged up in the trail net of the Affaire de Poisons. One of them was a certain Father Barthélemy Lemeignan, who was questioned on 31 July 1680 regarding the conjurations he was reputed to have made to recover hidden treasures. The subsequent interrogation is recorded almost verbatim:

> - Whether, while making the conjurations, he was not dressed in his surplice and his stole?
> - Yes, one cannot perform them without this.
> - Whether he did not perform the conjurations in cellars?
> - Yes.
> - Who were present at the conjurations?
> - It happened five or six years ago, he does not remember who.
> - Whether the conjurations had not been handwritten?
> - Yes, and it had been the conjurations of Saint Cyprianus and Saint Ambrosius, and he did nothing but change a few words; instead of conjuring the demon to depart from the body, he commanded [them] to depart from that place. This was in order to lift treasures.[306]

These few lines of conversation form a perfect illustration of the organic link between Christian exorcism and necromantic magic that some historians have surmised: the 'conjurations of Saint Cyprianus and Saint Ambrosius' are approved rites of exorcism; by changing a few words, they can be used to exorcise a demon from a place where a treasure is hidden instead of from a human body, thus bringing the buried riches to light.

Other practices that are reported in the records of the interrogation rooms also comply with what we know from other sources. Mention is made several times of magic 'figures', books of conjurations, and pieces of paper with demands or entreaties to demons that are to be put under the chalice or under the host during consecration, preferably for three or nine times.[307]

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with the devil.

[305] While Somerset does an excellent job in unravelling the historical facts of the Affair, an analysis of the interrogation records from the vantage point of modern insights into demonic magic has, to my knowledge, not been undertaken as of yet.

[306] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:272-273. An exorcism that was (falsely) attributed to Ambrosius did indeed circulate in the medieval and early modern ages, while Cyprian, in one of his letters, gives an exorcism formula to be used during baptism which involves threatening the demons with eternal punishment. See Adolph Franz, *Die kirchliche Benediktionen im Mittelalter*, 2 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1909), 2:578-579 and 2:534n.

[307] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:57, 6:81, 6:213, 6:220-221, 6:238 (where Guibourg recounts how he consecrated a 'book of conjurations' by reading Mass over it on nine consecutive days), 6:283-284.

This is strongly reminiscent of similar practices from both learned and folk magic. It is possible that the remarkable custom of celebrating Mass over the naked belly of a woman derived from similar ideas. This singular procedure was first disclosed by the astrologer Lesage, and thus may well be entirely fictitious.[308] If there was anything real in it at all, it may be that an analogous logic was behind it: in reciting Mass over the body of the woman, the magical operation by which the demons increased her sex appeal was further enhanced, in the same way as the power of the medicinal herbs and amulets put underneath the altar or the chalice was increased during consecration.[309] It is clear that a clandestine Mass would have to be held for this: it would hardly be feasible to put a naked woman on the altar during services.

Another hypothesis might be that the nude woman was meant as an offering. As the witches at the Sabbath sealed their pact with Satan by giving themselves sexually to him, so the nude lady, her legs dangling to the side, might be understood to offer herself to the demon. As was the case with witches, she could expect certain favours in return, and could also ask for favours for others, as is reported several times during the interrogations.[310] If it is suggested that high-ranking ladies 'made recite themselves a Mass of this kind', this does not necessarily mean that they functioned as naked altars themselves. Rather, some of the earlier testimonies suggest that another woman would be used in a rite performed on their behalf.[311] It is tempting, in addition, to interpret the 'carnal knowledge' the priest is sometimes said to have had of this female altar as a kind of diabolical sexual union by proxy.

Of course, this may be reading too much into what may simply have been a sexual fantasy. The same may hold true for the strange magical concoction of male and female sexual fluids described in the records. Introvigne retraces this practice to the sexual magic of Indian Tantra and Chinese Taoism, unfortunately without telling in what miraculous way knowledge of these methods arrived in the murky underground of seventeenth-century Paris.[312] If a source must be suggested for these practices, as well as the other instances of illicit sexual behaviour that have been recounted, the earlier attribution of similar activities to heretics and sorcerers might be a much better option. We have already quoted copious examples of this. In addition to Augustine of Hippo and other Patristic authors with regard to the Manicheans, the fifteenth-century Inquisitor Nicolaus Jaquerius also told about oblations of human sperm. 'And what a horrible thing was heard of a few years ago', he recounts, 'A certain priest and a women secretly had carnal intercourse in church, so that their seed became mixed with the sacramental Crisma.'[313] More or less similar 'recipes' for love magic involving sexual effluvia are mentioned in medieval penitentiary manuals.[314]

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[308] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:56-57. References to this practise prior to the Affair of the Poisons seem scarce. I am only aware of one earlier occurrence of a roughly similar nature, described by Reginald Scot in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* from 1584 (cited in Medway, *Lure of the Sinister*, 382): 'In Gelderland a priest persuaded a sicke woman that she was bewitched; and except he might sing a masse upon her bellie, she could not be holpen. Whereunto se consented, and laie naked on the altar whilest he sang masse, to the satisfieng of his lust; but not to the release of hir greefe.'

[309] It must be remarked that Lesage, in his interrogation of 28 November 1679, also describes how ceremony and conjuration were used by a priest to convince a girl he had seduced that she did not need to be afraid of becoming pregnant: Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:56.

[310] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:300, 6:328.

[311] Cf. Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6 :295, where it is said that 'Madame de Montespan s'est fait dire une de ces sortes de messes'; on Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:328, Guibourg gives the formula of conjuration used during these masses as such: 'I invoke you, spirits whose names are written on this paper, to accomplish the will and wishes of the person for which this mass is celebrated' ('Je vous conjure, esprits, dont vos noms sont dans ce papier écrits, d'accomplir la volonté et la dessein de la personne pour laquelle cette messe est célébrée…'). The possibility of having Masses celebrated 'by procuration' (i.e., on the body of another female) is clearly indicated in Marie Montvoisin's deposition regarding Madame de Montespan – although it is made equally clear that Montespan had had Masses read over her own body too. See Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6 :295.

[312] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 37.

What the ceremonies described above also do *not* embody – contrary to what Introvigne *et alia* maintain – is an early example of the black Mass.[315] That is, not if we follow the definition given by Introvigne himself for the black Mass: an inverted Roman Catholic Mass in which, by appropriately changing the formulae, Satan is worshiped and Jesus Christ is cursed. A case could be made for the fact that demons are worshipped in these 'nude' masses (although one could equally well argue that they are 'bound'). But there is no indication in the texts of an 'inverted' mass of any kind. On the contrary, it is said at least once that the ritual used is that of a perfectly normal Mass, the only difference being that the priest invokes the demons after consecration, while mentioning the names of those on whose behest he conjures them.[316] Much as in exorcism and in classic demonic magic, the consecration and the host here serve as loci of power that can be used to force the demons to appear and fulfil one's request.[317] As only a proper ritual could assure the desired manifestation of the divine, an inverted Mass would be strangely inappropriate. It would be equally surprising if this mass was used to curse Jesus, as it was precisely his powerful bodily presence that enabled the officiating priest to deal with the demons. Indeed, there is no trace of such a practice in the records regarding the Affair of the Poisons. In the accounts recorded during the interrogations, the host is always treated with respect; the only time a host is 'cut up', this is mentioned almost in passing, and seems to serve a purely practical purpose.[318]
What we are looking at, in brief, can probably be best described as an odd mixture of classic necromancy, alternative eucharistic devotion, and sexual magic of unclear origin. Although the descriptions of these ceremonies furnished an important contribution to the later lore of the Missa Negra, there is nothing to suggest that they were meant to be antichristian or blasphemous. Labelling them as black Masses would thus be incorrect. As a matter of fact, the term 'messe noir' (black Mass) is never used in the interrogation records, in stark contrast to Introvigne's contention that the expression originated with the 'case La Voisin'.[319]

As mentioned above, the peculiar female altars that we encounter in the Affair of the Poisons might be regarded either as a magical tool receiving divine blessing or as an offering to the demons; or, alternatively, as both at the same time. The notion of offering, however, gives us the best entry point to understand the other, sometimes patently gruesome practices that feature in the interrogation records. We encounter descriptions, first, of several people who are portrayed as having given themselves to the devil 'body and soul'.[320] We will deal with the probability of these matters more thoroughly later on. Here, it suffices to remark that concluding a pact with the devil does not always seem to have been a straightforward matter. In order to amount to anything, it was clearly expected that the pact be signed by the devil or the demon himself, and this was evidently not an easy thing to arrange. Thus we hear of great magical exertions to ensure the agreement is signed; at one time, we even read about plans for a voyage to the Caribbean, where 'by the method of the savages one would be able to

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[313] Jaquerius, *Flagellum Haereticorum Fascinariorum*, 57-58. 'Et quod horrible est auditu, à paucis annis, quidam sacerdos & mulier in Ecclesia clam carnaliter concubuerunt, ut semen eorum cum sacramento Crismata commisceretur.'
[314] Harmening. *Superstitio*, 230-231.
[315] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 34; Introvigne, 'Satanism', 1035 ('La Voisin invented the 'black Mass' […]').
[316] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:300, 6 :327.
[317] Cf. Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:221-22, 6:238-284.
[318] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:275, 6:277; 6:336, where the host is 'cut in little pieces' to be kept in vases with consecrated blood.
[319] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 34. Scanning the records, I only encountered one faint allusion to a 'reversed Mass' ('messe à l'envers'), but this testimony is clearly only hearsay, with the accused explicitly stating that she did not witness the ceremony (deposition La Filastre; Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:221).
[320] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:46-47; 6:167; 6:438.

converse and make a pact with Maboya, who is the devil'.[321] Of course, the devil can also be conjured by harnessing the supreme divine power; this leads to paradoxical situations in which Masses are read over pacts with the devil, or invocations in the name of the Trinity serve as a prelude to ceremonies in which a person abrogates baptism and church.[322] As one suspect attested: 'A consecrated host renders conjurations more powerful, and has the power to make the spirit emerge.'[323]

Another, less comical way to enlist the services of Satan is to offer *somebody else* to him. The sometimes vague descriptions in the interrogation records seem to describe two ways to do this. The first is to give the soul of a child, preferably one's own, to the devil or one of his demons. The best manner to do this, apparently, is before and/or instead of ordinary, Christian baptism. This explains some of the awkward ceremonies involving women giving birth that we find described. In large parts of Europe, it was believed that children could become possessed by demons if baptism was not administered as soon as possible.[324] The archival records regarding the Affair of the Poisons describe at least one occasion on which this mechanism is deliberately reversed. In a cellar where a treasure may have been buried, rituals are performed on a women on the point of giving birth, during which she promises her child to the demon, 'adding that she even would renounce to baptise the child of which she was pregnant; and on another piece of parchment [she] wrote another pact by which she gave her child to Astaroth, and consented that he would take possession of it on the moment that it would come to birth'.[325] Apparently, however, not only recently born, unbaptized children could be offered in this way: in another interrogation, La Filastre is accused of having given her daughter of fourteen or fifteen to the devil 'in order to obligate the spirits to appear'. To accomplish this, a priest recited three Masses over the abdomen of the girl, during one of which he had sex with her – and that seems to have been everything that happened with her, for a later declaration speaks of her as being alive, and presumably well.[326]

These examples of a kind of 'spiritual offering' are exceptions; as we have already seen, the type of infant sacrifice most frequently noted in the records of the Chambre Ardente is the simple slaughter of a newborn child. Here we are indeed far removed from the offering of a dove or cockerel that the classic manuals of necromancy prescribe to 'allure' the spirits.[327] As far as the literature shows, there is no mention of infant sacrifice in the traditions of European demonic magic. For the source of this idea, we must turn once again to the tradition of attribution regarding the religious other. By now, it is probably unnecessary to repeat how allegations of ritual infanticide and similar atrocities formed part and parcel of the stereotype of dissident Christians, sorcerers, and Jews. Witches in particular were depicted as preying upon young or unbaptised children, which they presented to their master the devil at the Sabbat or slaughtered to use as a component in their magical unguents.[328] More specifically, ecclesiastical authors like Isodore of Seville and Hugo of St. Victor attested to the fact that 'the demons love human blood', and that the offering of the blood of humans was an essential part of the routines of demonic magic.[329] In 1680 in Paris, these ideas must still have been very much in people's minds. Even as recently as 1675, there had been public uproar in the city about rumours that children were being sacrificed to prepare a ritual 'bath of blood'.[330]

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[321] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:73.
[322] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:221-22, 6:283-284.
[323] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:225: 'Une hostie consacrée rendait les conjurations plus fortes, et avait le pouvoir de faire venir l'esprit.'
[324] Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 100-102.
[325] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:438.
[326] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:258-259; 6:309.
[327] Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, 157.
[328] Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 100-102.
[329] Harmening. *Superstitio*, 205-206

The macabre practises we find in the records of the Affaire des Poisons clearly derive from such attributed constructs about 'reversed' diabolical worship. The next question, however, would be: *in what way*? Are we dealing with mere rumours here, which reflect 'residual fears of witchcraft' and broader conceptions about what practitioners of diabolic magic might do? Or are these descriptions of real practices by people who adopted iconic and stereotypical forms of devil worship because they think this the proper way to appease the princes of darkness? In other words, are we still dealing with *attribution*, or is it rather an example of *identification* the texts are showing us here?

The answer to this question depends on the actual occurrence of the macabre practices described. The fact that our sources are not to be trusted a priori has already been sufficiently commented upon. Modern historiography, moreover, does not render an univocal verdict on this point. Introvigne, for instance, writes about human sacrifices that 'in certain cases at least […] children could have been slaughtered and sacrificed', while Somerset concludes that it is 'impossible to know whether children had really been sacrificed.'[331] Was La Voisin really a relentless organiser of horrors? One remark from the sources gives a somewhat different impression: it tells how during one abortion, she wept tears of joy when the midwife who performed it baptised the foetus.[332] One can imagine how the combination of her secret practice as an *aborteuse* with dabbling in magic may have induced macabre developments; one can also easily imagine, however, how this combination could have given occasion to some grisly rumours. As a matter of fact, la Voisin steadfastly denied any knowledge of improper Masses or child sacrifices up to the moment of her death on the stake.[333] Nor were any bodily remains of the sacrifice victims ever recovered, contrary to the assertions of some historians.[334] We have no conclusive indication that we are not dealing with pure fabrications here.

By now, the shrewd reader may have noticed that we have gradually slid from perfectly feasible practices of demonic magic into a complex of allegations which is almost identical to that traditionally ascribed to the 'Satanist' other – including aberrant sexual behaviour, infanticide, and even a hint of conspiracy (the plot to kill the king). We can not be sure at what point we cross the border between events that actually occurred and the extensive realm of invention. The Affair of the Poisons resembles a grey zone where fact indiscernibly melts into fiction, attribution into identification, 'Christian' magic into possible forms of Satanism. Given the inherent uncertainties the source material presents, it seems inappropriate to me to make overly bold assertions regarding the question of whether this is an early historical instance of Satanism or not. There is simply too much we do not know, and with the evidence available, we may never be able to resolve this matter with absolute certainty. In the next section, however, we present some interesting facts that may shed some light on what what was really going on in the grey zone.

Satanists before the Modern Age?

The Affair of the Poisons was not without consequences. In the wake of the scandalous affair, the French king issued a royal edict restricting the sale of arsenics and other harmful

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[330] Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 6:288n.

[331] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 36-37; Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 326, 339.

[332] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 152.

[333] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 232-233.

[334] Anne Somerset at least could find no mention of such a search for human remains: cf. *The Affair of the Poisons*, 162. Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 36, claims that the police discovered a crematory at the premises of La Voisin with the charred fragments of burned bodies still in it and that she herself claimed to have burnt two thousand children, but unfortunately does not refer to any sources for these statements. Even if the bodies of children had been recovered, however, this would not prove that they had been sacrificed to demons rather than being the remains of abortions.

substances. It also stipulated penalties for every person *pretending* to be a diviner, magician, or sorcerer. These persons were to be banished; in the case of flagrant sacrilege of the Christian religion, death sentences were to be meted out. The word 'pretended' in particular made this edict revolutionary. Here was an official statement of scepticism regarding the reality of sorcery, issued in the name of the king.[335]

It was in the context of enforcing this decree that René Voyer, Comte d'Argenson, reported on some unusual suspects in a memorandum he submitted to his superior in October 1702. This memorandum lay buried in the archives until it was dug up and published by the French historian Robert Mandrou in 1979.[336] The Count, who had succeeded De la Reynie as chief of the Parisian police, had compiled his *mémoire* to urge immediate action against the guild of 'false sorcerers' which had become of late, he complained, more numerous than some of the genuine guilds of honest artisans. He illustrated his discourse with descriptions of nineteen of the most important bands that plied this trade in Paris, of the false sorcerers that led them, as well as their principal accomplices, and sometimes of the 'dupes' whose credulity they abused. Many of these descriptions are of great interest to anyone wishing to unravel the protohistory of Satanism. We learn, for instance, that right at the beginning of the eighteenth century, among the throngs of fortune-tellers, matchmakers, palm readers, treasure seekers, and people who sold waters to restore lost virginities, the French capital counted at least ten persons who occupied themselves commercially with furnishing 'pacts with the devil'.[337]

Apart from many practices belonging to 'ordinary' necromancy, this remarkable document contains several scenes that seem directly reminiscent of the Affair of the Poisons. We can read about improper masses celebrated by derelict clergy; for instance, the renegade Capuchin monk Abbé Le Fevre, who is living with a woman named La Mariette in the house of her husband, 'where he has recited Mass at midnight several times, in sacerdotal habits that La Mariette borrowed from a priest of Saint Séverin; [and with] a big beer jug serving as chalice. The purpose of all these Masses had been to conclude a pact with the infernal Spirit, in order to obtain a million, a pension of two thousand *écus* a month, and the gift of making oneself beloved with persons of rank […]'[338] Later, Le Fevre 'carried his impiety so far that he celebrated the Holy Mass and consecrated the host on the abdomen of La Mariette'.[339] In addition, the memorandum recounts some other instances of Masses without nudity 'in order to attract the infernal spirits and compel them to ratify the pacts which have been written on virginal parchment.'[340] Twice, mention is made of women who give up their children to the devil, although the exact proceedings and the precise fate of these infants remains misty (in one case, we merely read that the newborn child was 'immediately taken away'; in another case, the as yet unborn child is marked by a demon, but we do not get to know what happened with it after it was born – although the demon suggests the child will be a page of Lucifer, who 'passionately loves children').[341]

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[335] Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers*, 482.

[336] 'Mémoire de M. d'Argenson sur les associations de faux sorciers à Paris en 1702,' in Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle*, 275-328.

[337] D'Argenson mentions the following characters as being involved in 'negotiating contracts with the devil' (page numbers from Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle*, added between parenthesis): Jemme (286), Abbé Touzard (290), Bendrode (291), D'amour and his wife (292), Louvet (294), Lion (296), Abbé Le Fevre (300), Rouillon (306), Père Robert (309), Marotte la Jardinière (309).

[338] Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle*, 296-297.

[339] Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle*, 299. In 1695, D'Argenson had already reported a similar case of Mass being said on the naked body of a women in order to conclude a pact; see Ravaisson, *Archives de la Bastille*, 7:172-173.

[340] Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle*, 290; also 297-298.

[341] Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle*, 286-287; 319-321.

Again, it becomes evident that making a pact with Satan was not a simple operation. D'Argenson tells us about a gentleman who ruined himself in fruitless attempts to seal a pact with the infernal powers, and of an old maid who tried to interest Satan in a pact with her for ten or twelve years but did not succeed, 'the devil not wanting anything of her'.[342] In fact, most of the pacts we read about in the memorandum fail to be concluded. Often, sacrifices have to be made and complicated operations are required; and in this limbo where people desperately entreat diabolical favour, a minor industry of fraud seems to have developed, with mediums and magicians who claim to know the secret of obtaining Satan's signature. In atmosphere, this underworld of small-time crooks closely resembles the underground occult circuit that had been brought to light during the Affair of the Poisons. D'Argenson's memorandum, however, is clearly far more reliable as a historical source. Despite a faint hint of political intrigue, his report is not part of a political *Spiel* with predetermined objectives.[343] And despite his pious concern that the practices he describes 'may lead to the destruction of religion in all its principles', his account is balanced, sober, and matter of fact, with a tone of polished scepticism that at times only half conceals his amusement.[344] In addition, his information does not derive from the interrogation of suspects, but from informers from inside the occult underworld who had opted for respectability. This does not mean D'Argenson's memorandum can be trusted in all its particulars – it is obvious to anyone who reads it that some rather tall stories have managed to creep in. But in its general outlines, the picture it presents seems true enough. There is no reason to doubt that there was indeed a group of people active in the French capital that sought to make money by negotiating 'pacts with the spirits'.

What exactly can we understand by these pacts? Naturally, the practices we learn about through D'Argenson's memorandum are mediated to us by his words; they might not bethe terms that people who were actually involved would have used. They might have understood their relations with the otherworld as a partial agreement with spirits that they bound rather than venerated. We must remain wary of the sweeping terminology of the times, which also affected D'Argenson's account; he evidently did not write with the sensibilities of a modern scholar of religion. Yet throughout his long *mémoire*, we encounter more or less unambiguous descriptions of people who want to give themselves to the devil 'body and soul'.[345]

Evidently, D'Argenon's informers had told him that there were numerous people in Paris who were eager to become vassals of Satan. Nor do we need to have *a priori* doubts about the veracity of these reports. Scattered throughout the early modern period, we can find a good number of cases of genuine, solidly documented pacts with the devil. One of the most famous is the one attempted in 1596 by David Lipsius or Leipzig, a freshman theology student at the university of Tübingen. His pact is still extant, the full text of which is as follows:

> I, David Leipzig from Erfurt in Thüringen, write and inform you, Auerhahn in Hell, that I want to make a pact with you and be yours, when you will presently, when I come home again, leave three golden guilders next to this letter, and afterwards will give me what I covet. In anticipation of your answer.[346]

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[342] Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle*, 292, 300.

[343] At one point, D'Argenson suggests interrogating certain suspects in the Bastillle, 'parce qu'on a lieu de croire qu'ils ont été consultez par des personnes d'un rang distingué dont il sera peut être du service du Roy de savoir les visions et les folies'; Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle*, 281.

[344] Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle*, 279. I fail to understand where Muchembled detected a lingering fear of the devil in D'Argenson's text, as he claims in his *History of the Devil*, 172.

[345] Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle*, 315, 299, and 308 (Boyar wants to engage himself with the devil in a 'perpetual pact').

[346] 'Ich, David Leipzig von Erffurdt aus Thuringen, schreibe und thue dir kunt, Awerhan in der Hellen, das ich mit dir will einen Pact machen und dein sein will, wen du mir itzundt, wen ich wieder heim kome, 3 goltgulden zu dem brief legen wirst, und darnach mit mir das wirst eingehen, waz ich begere. Bin einer Antwort gewertigk': quoted in Volker Schäfer, 'Tübinger Teufelspakte,' in *'...helfen zu graben den Brunnen des Lebens': Historische*

David's venture in Satanism was duly discovered when his roommate walked into his room and saw the piece of paper Lipsius had left for the demon. In 1698, another Tübinger theology student tried to enlist with the devil, selling his soul for 'thousand pair of guilders, and a moneymaking homunculus' in a pact written with his own blood and signed 'Georg Friederich Haim, formerly a Christian, henceforth your serf in exchange for money.'[347] In 1639, local authorities in the west of Holland apprehended Jan Hartman Oosterdagh, a former protestant preacher who had ended up as a tramp, and were dumbfounded when they discovered a written pact on his body in which Oosterdagh surrendered himself to Satan, again in exchange for money.[348] Other examples have been uncovered from archives in Holland, Sweden, and Spanish America.[349] Although some of the stories mentioned impress one as rather frivolous or pubertal, these are all cases where we have reasonable indications of a personal, deliberate choice for the devil. They exclude instances of obvious insanity and cases where people pretended to (have) be(en) a follower of Satan as part of a public spectacle (as with the possessed nuns of Louviers and Loudun) or to attract the attention of the religious authorities (as some harshly treated slaves in Spanish South America seem to have done in order to end up in the comparatively lenient hands of the Inquisition).[350]

Clearly, opting to serve Satan was not an impossible choice in early modern Europe; and the assertions of the Conte d'Argenson consequently may well have a solid foundation in truth. So here, at last, we may have a clear historical example of people we can define as Satanists. For we are certainly witnessing forms of intentional veneration of Satan here. If selling your soul to Satan does not qualify as Satanism, probably not much else will. Rituals were held for his appeasement, body and soul surrendered to him. We can certainly call this veneration religious, in an obvious sort of way. The question is: what kind of religion exactly? Although D'Argenson liked to brand them 'sectateurs' and sometimes called their gatherings 'assemblies', these early modern venerators of Satan were not organised into a creedal community that explicitly offered an alternative religious interpretation of the cosmos. The sources are not very eloquent about their world-view, but with few exceptions, we do not encounter proof of a complete rejection of the Christian world view or of a religious rebellion against a dominant Christianity. Even the practices that most scandalized their

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Jubiläumausstellung des Universitätsarchivs Tübingen, ed. Uwe Jens Wandel, and others, 72-77 (Tübingen: Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen, 1977), 77.

[347] The text of the demand in German goes: 'gegen 100 paare Gulden und ein geldmännlein, das mir alle nacht noch so viel geld zuwegen bringe als ich Ihme unterlege'; see Schäfer, 'Tübinger Teufelspakte,' 74. Both students had been motivated by money problems, and both were only punished lightly. Lipsius was banished from Tübingen; he later became a respected medical practitioner. Haim joined the army and may have ended up as a mayor.

[348] Hans de Waardt, 'Met bloed ondertekend.' *Sociologische Gids* 36 (1989): 224-244 and 288-289; there 233.

[349] Mikael Pettersson, '"God is caught in Hell, so it is better to believe in the Devil": Conceptions of Satanists and sympathies for the Devil in Early Modern Sweden,' in *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*, ed. Per Faxneld and Jesper Petersen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World*, 49, 81, 85-87, 90-97; Iris Gareis, 'Feind oder Freund? Der Teufel in Spanien und in der Neuen Welt im 16.-18. Jahrhundert,' *@KIH-eSkript: Interdisziplinäre Hexenforschung online* 3 (2011) 1:77-84, at http://www.historicum.net/no_cache/persistent/artikel/9107/, there 83-84 (accessed 14 December 2011). If somebody was to shake the box of European archival evidence real good, many more cases might tumble out.

[350] For 'Satanists' with evident psychic problems, see De Waardt, 'Met bloed ondertekend,' 233-234. A more well-known example is the Austrian painter Christoph Haitzmann (1651-1700), whose case attracted the attention of Sigmund Freud in 1923 – see Sigmund Freud, 'Eine Teufelsneurose im siebzehnten Jahrhundert,' in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Anne Freud, and others. 15 vols. (1940; reprint, London: Imago Publishing, 1947), 13:315-353. For the famous affairs of Louviers and Loudun, see, among many others, Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers*, 263-312; on the mechanisms involved with 'voluntary' Satanist impersonators, here and at other times, see Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 181-184. Examples of South-American slaves who sought the refuge of the Inquisition by pretending to have made a pact with Satan are mentioned in Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World*, 79-81.

contemporaries, such as holding Mass on the naked belly of a woman, do not seem to have been meant as intentional provocations or profanations of Christian religion.
Rather, rituals like these seem to encompass a *syncretism* between Christianity and Satanism, however unlikely this may sound.[351] Obviously, taking recourse to Satanic powers contains an implicit criticism of some of the central tenets of 'traditional' Christianity. But as far as we can tell from our meagre sources, this was not what most early modern practitioners of Satanism were interested in. Their Satanism did not focus on doctrinal issues or an explanation of the universe. Rather, it was eminently practical and pragmatic in orientation, with the supernatural, be it 'good' or 'evil', primarily conceived of as a possible source of power, wealth, and prosperity. Like the Late Antique Satanians described by Ephipanius of Salamis, they merely took refuge with Satan because he was powerful and strong, and consequently might be capable of fulfilling their wishes.
Hard as it may be to grasp for many modern readers, such pragmatism was not at all unusual in the religious practices of the early modern period or before.[352] Those who sold their soul to Satan only drew the extreme conclusion of this attitude. Massimo Introvigne's concluding words about the Affair of the Poisons apply almost verbatim here. 'None of the protagonists of the resounding Parisian affair was battling to combat Christianity or to glorify Satan. More prosaically, their objectives consisted in submitting, with the help of the Demon, some rival for love who was ungraceful enough to be younger in years […], or to earn enough money for a retirement on a nice property in Italy […]. It are these particularly sordid aspects that prevent us from speaking of Satanism – in the sense of veneration of the Demon – here already.'[353] This seems a fair characterization to me. I only beg to differ on Introvigne's final conclusion. I think we would do well not to apply stern post-Christian notions about what religion should be and what not to a popular and underground belief system from the early modern era. A lot of tribal and ancient religions operate on a quid pro quo basis as well; that does not prevent them from being religions.[354] Sure enough, many of the 'Satanist' practitioners described by D'Argenson seem to have stopped believing in their own magic as soon as they managed to run away with their clients' money.[355] But that still leaves intact the fact that their *clients* evidently trusted in their assertions and were often prepared to invest huge sums of money out of this conviction. That they expected to reap the profits of their beliefs already in this earthly existence, and not only after death, does not strike me as the greatest of their follies.

This quotation from Introvigne brings us back to the Affaire des Poisons and the questions formulated at the end of the preceding section. Many of the practices found in D'Argenson's memo are remarkably similar to those described in the interrogation records of the Chambre Ardente. To recapitulate our conclusions: we established that our sources regarding the Affaire de Poisons are not to be trusted at face value, and that the practices they describe,

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[351] D'Argenson gives another illustration of such syncretism when he describes the practices of Picot, 'grand mareschal des magicians', who heals by making nine signs of the cross and nine 'soufflets a nom de Lucifer'. Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle*, 287. One is reminded here of Hutton's words about the practices of British 'cunning folk': 'It was not a counter-religion to Christianity; rather, the two coexisted and complemented each other.' – Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 101.
[352] Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 24, gives an example from rural communities where blessed weather bells that failed to avert storms would be blessed anew, this time in the name of the devil.
[353] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 39.
[354] Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials*, 6, also makes this distinction, calling magic involving a pact 'contractual' and separating it from religious veneration of the devil. The same objections apply here. See the introduction for a more extensive theoretical discussion of these matters.
[355] See the delightful story about the Abbé Pinel, his consort Marie Anne, and their dealings with a certain Divot in Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle*, 309-324.

although reflecting many well-attested elements of necromantic magic, tend to devolve into the realm of stereotype and attribution. Here, however, we see many of them reappear – especially the 'Satanist' core element of the diabolical pact – and this time in a much more reliable document. What are the repercussions of this on our understanding of the Affaire des Poisons?

The answer to this question depends to a large extent on the exact nature of the relation between the latter and the Affair of the Poisons. It is possible that the form of Satanism described by the count had only arisen in the twenty years following the infamous affair, and was directly stimulated by it, in imitation perhaps of the alleged practice of La Voisin and her consorts. Religion and magic are perfectly capable of innovation, and the intense publicity surrounding the affair may well have given some people fresh ideas. That the affair still had much notoriety in 1702 is indicated by the veiled references D'Argenson made to it in the introduction to his memorandum, and by the fact that one of the soothsayers mentioned by d'Argenson claimed to keep office in the former quarters of La Voisin – apparently in the expectation that this fact would impress her customers.[356]

Another – and in my eyes more plausible – hypothesis would be that the Satanism described in 1702 was a continuation of practices already surfacing during the Affaire des Poisons and only temporarily – and probably very temporarily – suppressed by the Chambre Ardente. That means that beneath the poison conspiracy, the naked participation of royal mistresses, and the weekly infanticide, there could have been some real Satanist or proto-Satanist activities going on in the 1670s. *Some* of the accused during the Affair might actually have done *some* of the things they were accused of. There is nothing implausible about people making pacts with evil spirits or celebrating Mass in unusual ways – especially when we see the same things happen only twenty years later, in a roughly similar milieu of occult peddlers. What is more, we have occasional attestations of practices like these predating the Affaire de Poisons. Anne Somerset cites a case from 1677, when a priest called Bernard Tournet was burned on the stake for 'sacrileges and profanation of the holy sacrifice of Mass itself, invocation of the devil and the seduction of several persons whom he abused under false pretexts of making them find treasure by means of evil spirits'.[357] Unfortunately, these transgressions are not described in more detail; but they sound intriguingly similar to those mentioned during the Affair of the Poisons and by D'Argenson. More in general, as we have seen, evidence for genuine attempts to conclude a pact with the devil can be found in relative profusion in earlier sources.

All these indications combined, I think, give ample occasion to speak of a marginal 'tradition' of Satanism during the early modern age, and maybe before. I put the word tradition between quotation marks because, if there is one thing this Satanism certainly is not, it is an underground community of adherents who transmit their precepts or practices from generation to generation. In other words: we are not dealing here with a continuously organised form of secret, alternative religion standing in continuous opposition to Christianity over time, as the Christian tradition of attribution and some of its later continuators imagined to be extant. As a matter of fact, the origins of many of these practices may be found, I believe, in precisely this same tradition of attribution. Massimo Introvigne is probably right when he suggests that Satanist concepts were mainly transmitted through books during this period, discovered again and again in the pages of reports and pamphlets on famed and famous devil-worshippers.[358] From very early Christian times, magicians were *attributed* to derive their powers from Satan, implicitly or explicitly requiring subjugation to him by way of a (written) pact. The methods and notions of pact-making thus did not need to be invented. They had been preached from the pulpits and expounded in popular lore and literature for centuries, each time yet another

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[356] Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle*, 281, 303.
[357] Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons*, 141.
[358] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 46.

variant of the Protinus or Theophilus story was recounted. For some audiences, these could easily have had an advertisement effect. After all, Protinus' servant *did* get the girl in the end, did he not?
Occasionally, the sources give a glimpse of evidence for this. In the case of David Lipsius, for instance, the authorities discovered that he found the inspiration for his pact in a popular booklet about 'Christophor Wagner's Pact with the Devil called Auerhan', a fictional story in the Faust tradition.[359] This was all the more evident because Lipsius had addressed his pact to 'Auerhahn', in normal life the German designation for a kind of forest bird (capercaillie in English), and an unusual name for a demon. Thus we have some reason to consider these sixteenth- and seventeenth-century instances of Satanism to be early forms of *identification*. Practices attributed by Christian authors to Jews, heretics, and witches, but especially to magicians, were partially adopted by these early modern Satanists, apparently because they thought this was the proper way to become a follower of the devil or to practise magic.[360] Incidentally, this also indicates once more how strongly embedded this early modern Satanism remained in the framework of Christian cosmology and theology. Rarely do we encounter traces of innovation that signal a process of autonomous religious creativity, be it in doctrine or ritual. One example of the latter may be the Satanism we find described in connection with the Affaire of the Poisons, where ideas from educated and popular magic and notions from Roman Catholic liturgy seem to have blended into new rites with which to manipulate the otherworld.[361]

Another aspect of these early traces of Satanist identification and innovation must be emphasized here as well: and that is their extreme marginality, both sociologically and historically, *vis à vis* the dominating forces of attribution. The rare instances of Satanism we encounter during this period are mostly isolated, individual cases of people who are in extremely dire straits or who can be located on the very margins of society.[362] The only exceptions, in a way, to this general rule are the 'Satanists' whose presence is attested in France during the late seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century. Here we can discern the vague outlines of an underground and clandestine subculture partially involved in Satanist religious practices, with even a faint hint of something of a living tradition of ritual knowledge transmitted from one practitioner to another. But despite the fact that a few of the religious specialists in this field evidently enjoyed some measure of commercial success, the overall impression we get of this Satanism is that it was a relatively insignificant affair hidden away in the back alleys of the more sordid parts of town. D'Argenson paints a highly entertaining but also rather disheartening picture of a world of crooks, swindlers, and desperate clients, most of whom end their lives either in prison or in the *Hôpital de Dieu*, Paris's infamous relief centre for paupers.
If one conclusion is to be drawn from the historical findings presented in this chapter, than it must be the overwhelming preponderance of *attribution* in the history of Satanism before the onset of modernity. Although many points in this history remain uncertain or disputed, we can clearly observe how the *concept* of Satanism predated the practice of venerating Satan itself. This concept of Satanism arose in the confrontation of Christianity with divergent religious

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[359] Schäfer, 'Tübinger Teufelspakte,' 73. Subsequently, the magister who had read the book to Lipsius was also arrested, as was one of his relatives who owned a copy of the book. All were soon released, however.
[360] In a more general way, Dieter Harmening already suggested the unintentional side-effects churchly propaganda could have had; see Harmening, *Superstitio*, 73: 'Verordnungen über Superstitionen stehen in einem doppelten Verhältnis zur Wirklichkeit: sie können sie abbilden, können sie aber auch erst schaffen.'
[361] Rudimentary forms of early modern Satanist 'theology' or ideology are also recorded by Pettersson, '"God is caught in Hell"', and Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World*, 84-85.
[362] The marginality of early modern Satanists is emphasized by all authors that speak about them; see De Waardt, 'Met bloed ondertekend,' 239; Gareis, 'Feind oder Freund?' 84; Pettersson, ''God is caught in Hell''.

groups within and outside the Christian community. Its primary function was to serve as a tool for categorization, or perhaps more accurately, vilification. Early Christian notions about pagan polytheism as the veneration of demons, and rumours about the antinomian and blasphemous activities of heterodox groups, merged in the early Middle Ages into the concept of a counterreligion whose adherents actively and willingly venerated Satan and his demons in licentious rites. It was this *stereotype* of the Satanist that would prove to be the most important contribution to the later development of an actually practiced Satanism.

In this respect, what can be said to have mattered most about the Satanism of the Affair of the Poisons was not its alleged or actual ritual practice, however colorful or gruesome. Rather, it was the way this Satanism was described by the very official agencies that set out to crush it, and the tendency this reflects in the further development of the Satanist stereotype. Compared with earlier times, in this period references to the actions or actual presence of Satan were conspicuous by their absence. Instead, the focus had shifted to the activities of the Satanists themselves, a group of persons who dedicated themselves completely to the Evil One, staged obscene rites for devious ends, and were suspected of having a dangerously asocial or even antisocial inclination. It was a stereotype well-suited to a new, more skeptical era; and one that would outlast the millennium.

Intermezzo 1
The Eighteenth Century: Death of Satan?

While the Affair of the Poisons was just erupting, a comical play by the playwrights Thomas Corneille and Donneau de Visé had premiered in the Paris theatre. Entitled 'La Devineresse' ('The Divineress'), it told the story of a female soothsayer and magician. Not surprisingly, given the real-life scandal that had already become the talk of the town, the play proved a box office hit, with spectators crowding the theatre to attend its performance. What might be more surprising is the strikingly sceptical depiction the play gives of the magical practices of its eponymous protagonist. The divineress herself is heard to declare that 'luck is the most important ingredient of success in this line of work': 'All you need is presence of mind, a bit of guts, a talent for intrigue, some trusted people in the right places, and to keep track of the incidents that happen and the course of love affairs. But above all: say a lot of things when someone comes to consult you. There is always a thing among them that happens to be true; and sometimes all it takes to gain renown, is to say the right thing two or three times by coincidence.'[363]

Corneille and Visé's play accurately reflected the shifting attitude towards 'supernatural' crime and the involvement of Satan and his demons that had begun to surface in Western Europe. In the hundred years that followed, mass persecutions for witchcraft or religious dissidence effectively came to an end in most Western nations. Historians have suggested a variety of causes and motives for this change in attitude. Initial criticism of the witchcraft trials, most assert, was not motivated by a stance of rational criticism *vis à vis* the reality of the supernatural. Rather, most authors objecting to the persecution of witches criticized the faulty judicial procedure involved or argued for the non-existence of diabolical witchcraft with recourse to older theological notions that denied Satan, as a spiritual being, the ability to exert direct influence on physical reality.[364] Gary K. Waite has suggested that in some regions, local societies simply grew tired of the legal bloodshed that was the consequence of the quest for a unitary religious state, while in other places, the realities of post-Reformation religious plurality made people sceptical about rumors of Satanist conspiracy.[365] More and more, people accused of being witches and heretics came to be considered victims of slander, misunderstanding, or psychiatric disorders, instead of malicious followers of Satan.

At the same time, the playground of the devil was correspondingly reduced. In 1691, the Dutch protestant minister Balthasar Bekker published *The Enchanted World*, in which he combined old providential theology and new Cartesian philosophy to argue that it was logically impossible for a spiritual entity like the angel of evil to exert any tangible influence on the kingdom of this world.[366] Confronting Christianity's hidden dualism, Bekker designated those believing in a powerful Satan 'ditheists'. 'If anyone wants to give *me* a new name because of my opinions, I may suffer it to be that of monotheist,' he provocatively exclaimed, 'This Book will bear witness to my effort to return to the Most High as much of

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[363] Thomas Corneille and Donneau de Visé, *La Devineresse: Comédie. Introduction et Notes par P.J. Yarrow*. (s.l.: University of Exeter, 1971), 42.

[364] Peter Maxwell-Stuart, 'The contemporary historical debate, 1400-1750,' in *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, ed. Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 11-32.

[365] Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 128, 197-205,

[366] On Bekker's debt to earlier providential theology, especially that of the spiritualists, see Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 29.

his Power and Wisdom as those that gave it to the Devil had taken away. I exorcise him from the world and bind him in Hell, in order that King Jesus will reign the more supreme.'[367] Although the Calvinist church authorities proceeded to expel Bekker from the pulpit, they could not prevent his book from being translated into virtually every major European language and provoking intense debate.[368]

Bekker's grand exorcism of Satan was picked up and intensified by the upcoming Enlightenment. In 1773, Voltaire roundly declared that 'we know well enough that Satan, Beelzebuth, and Astaroth do not exist any more than Tisiphone, Alector, and Megæra.'[369] The French *philosophe* might also have been among the first to suggest that the Jews had adopted their Satan in imitation of the Ahreman of the Persians while in Babylonian captivity, and preceded modern Biblical scholarship in doubting the assertion that the 'Lucifer' described in the prophecies of Isaiah had anything to do with the devil.[370] The lemma of the devil in the *Encyclopèdie* of Diderot, that monument of Enlightenment learning, consisted mainly of Scripture quotations, with the caustic remark thrown in that Europeans tended to think of the devil as black, while Ethiopians pictured him as white; 'The view of the former has as much validity as that of the latter.'[371] This criticism was comparatively mild, probably with an eye to avoiding censorship.[372] Other authors were more strident in their dismissal of Satan. In his 1696 dissertation, *De origine ac progressu Idolatriae et Superstitionum*, Anton van Dale (an early proponent of the Dutch Radical Enlightenment) had already voiced a reproach that would become a classic trope in later discussions of the subject. Priests and rulers had deliberately sustained fear of the devil in the common people, he maintained, in order to secure their own power and dominance.[373]

For the Enlightenment, in brief, belief in Satan and sorcery was part of the dead weight that had to be thrown off if the balloon of humanity was to reach its natural zenith. Belief in the devil became an object of derision or ridicule.[374] This deconstruction of Satan was part of a much more ambitious attempt to exorcise the Christian god from European society and put an end to the doctrinal monopoly and secular influence of institutional Christianity. This does not

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[367] Baltasar Bekker, *De Betooverde Weereld, zynde een grondig ondersoek van 't gemeen gevoelen aangaande de geesten, derselver Aart en vermogen, Bewind en Bedryf: als ook 't gene de Menschen door derselver kraght en gemeenschap doen* (Amsterdam: Daniel van den Dalen, 1691), 'Aan den Leser': 'Wil men my ter oorsaak mijns gevoelens een nieuwe naam geven: ik magh lijden dat het *Monotheist* magh zijn […]. Daarom sal my dit Boek tot een getuigenis verstrekken, dat ik den Allerhoogsten so veel meer van d'eere sijner Maght en Wijsheid weergeve, als sy hem benomen hadden die het aan den Duivel gaven. Ik ban hem uit de Weereld en bind hem in de Hel: op dat de Koning Jezus des te vrijer heersche […].'

[368] For Bekker, see G. Stronks, 'The significance of Bathasar Bekker's The Enchanted World,' in *Witchcraft in the Netherlands from the Fourteenth to the Twentieth Century* , ed. M. Gijswijt-Hofstra and W. Frijhoff (Rotterdam: Universitaire Pers, 1991), 149-156.

[369] *La Pucelle*, Chant Vingtième, note 2, cited in Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 1:33: 'On sait assez que Satan, Belzébuth, Astaroth n'existent pas plus que Tisiphone, Alector, et Mégère.'

[370] Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations et sur les principaux faits de l'histoire depuis Charlemagne jusqu'à Louis XIII*. 2 vols (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1963), 173-174, 177 [section 48].

[371] Dennis Diderot & Jean le Rond D'Alembert, *L'Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*. 17 vols. (Paris: Briasson, David l'Ainée, Le Breton & Durand, 1751-1772), 4: 927.

[372] In their treatment of 'sorcellerie', the *philosophes* could be more explicit. 'One only hears about feats of magic & malefice in places & times of ignorance,' the *Encyclopèdie* stated (Diderot and D'Alembert, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné*, 15:36). Voltaire voices similar opinions in his *Essai sur les mœurs*, 125-126 [section 35].

[373] Reference from Maxwell-Stuart, 'The contemporary historical debate, 1400-1750,' 30. For the disappearance of Satan in Enlightenment thought, see also Ernst Osterkamp, *Lucifer: Stationen eines Motivs* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 154-156; Peter A. Schock, *Romantic Satanism: Myth and the Historical Moment in Blake, Shelley, and Byron* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 13-17; and Muchembled, *History of the Devil*, 161-186.

[374] Compare the long list of eighteenth-century works featuring an ironic view on the devil or the demonic in Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 1:73-90.

imply that the Enlightenment, on the whole, was areligious. It certainly wasn't. But the 'god of the philosophers', as Pascal aptly called him, was a different deity from that of the Christianity of the past. In Enlightenment deism, god was seen as a wise creator who had put together the world as a flawless machine and had subsequently left it to run by itself according to the laws of nature. Man should use his god-given gift of rationality to understand the divine laws governing the cosmos and make sure to live in harmony with them; this was the 'natural' religion that was succinctly summarized by Daniel Defoe as 'Heaven resolved with Nature, Religion with Reason, and all Gods into Philosophy.'[375] According to some, this had also been the original religion of humanity, which in present-day religions had become occluded by superstition and the manipulations of priesthood. The Enlightenment thus saw a flourishing of 'scientific' theories about a primeval, universal religion; and the sketches some *philosophes* made for a new religion to replace Christianity could not only be understood as a reflection of the new height of rationality and civilisation that (European) mankind had now achieved, but also as a return to a pristine, unaccreted form of religiosity.[376]

The Enlightenment was also influential in the propagation of freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. Indeed, part of the hostility of the Enlightenment to 'traditional' Christianity derived from a moral distaste for its ongoing history of religious persecution.[377] Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), a protestant who had fled from France and had become a prominent spokesman of the early Radical Enlightenment, pioneered the protest against any form of state-endorsed doctrinal coercion with his eloquent arguments for complete legal equality for all forms of divergent religion.[378] The Dutch Republic, where he had found refuge, had been one of the first countries in Western Europe to stipulate that 'nobody shall be persecuted or examined for religious matters' and to grant some measure of liberty to the religious varieties contained within its borders.[379] After the Dutch Statholder William III had ascended the English throne, the Toleration Act of 1689 brought similar freedoms to England, while in other places, rulers who had embraced the Enlightenment instated de facto religious lenience. Even in these havens of tolerance, however, complete legal emancipation for religious minorities was still centuries away. Elsewhere, old patterns of persecution persisted. Especially in areas on the margins, the process of attributing Satanism and subsequent judicial repression continued as before. Scotland burned its last witch in 1722; Hungary and Poland experienced waves of witchcraft persecution in the early eighteenth century.[380] During the final decades of the eighteenth century, the area of what is now Dutch and Belgian Limburg was in the grip of a collective terror of bands of supernatural, Satanist brigands. Known as *Bockeryders* ('Riders of the Goat'), they allegedly displaced themselves riding on demons in the form of he-goats, and were said to have abrogated Christianity and sworn loyalty to Satan, with the total overthrow of Church and State as their ultimate aim. Hundreds of people died on the stake and the scaffold because of this spectre, and only the arrival of the French revolutionary forces put an end to the executions.[381]

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[375] Daniel Defoe, *A System of Magic* (1728), quoted in Evelyn Lord, *The Hell-Fire Clubs: Sex, Satanism and Secret Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 8.

[376] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Ma.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 292-293. See also Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994), particularly 1-26, for an overview of Enlightenment theories on original religion.

[377] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 262.

[378] Pierre Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique sur ces paroles de Jésus-Christ* Contrain-les d'entrer*, ou Traité de la tolérance universelle*, in *Oeuvres diverses*. 6 vols. (La Haye: P. Husson, 1727-1731), 377-420.

[379] Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 92.

[380] Hungarian witch persecutions were at their height from 1710 to 1750, while in Poland, 55% of known witch prosecutions date to the period between 1676 and 1725; see Muchembled, *History of the Devil*, 148

[381] There does not seem to exist any recent publication on the *Bockereyders* in a non-Dutch language. Anton

Occasional shreds of evidence tell us that older forms of Satanist identification also continued during the eighteenth century (and probably beyond). Introvigne cites the case of an Italian priest who convinced a nun and her sister to participate in 'Satanist' rites of a highly sexual nature, promising they would attain the mystical 'satisfaction' talked about by the Catholic Quietists of the day.[382] In a somewhat different vein, a band of robbers in the Dutch Republic made oaths binding themselves to Satan.[383] The age-old practice of soldiers giving themselves to the devil in order to remain unscathed during battle probably went on as well; even on nineteenth-century battlefields, little letters with a dedication to Satan could occasionally be found on the bodies of dead soldiers.[384] In eighteenth-century Halle, a cook was found to have written a pact with Satan while drunk. The would-be Satanist only received a mild punishment for blasphemy because, as his judges declared, 'no such pact can exist according to the facts of nature' ('per rerum natura kein solch pactum seyn kan'). The judicial faculty of Halle was well aware that only a few generations previously, punishment would have been much harsher, but stood by their verdict, 'since we have now adopted more reasonable principles'.[385] The German men of law held it for self-evident that the cook had found his ideas into some cheap booklet or broadsheet. After all, pulp tracts on the Satanic pacts of Luxembourg and Faust could be bought on virtually every street corner, often containing detailed renderings of the contracts these villains were said to have concluded with the devil.[386]

These scarce cases of devil worship in a more or less traditional mould all stem from judicial archives, where they have been gathering dust for centuries. History has reserved more posthumous notoriety for the so-called Hell-Fire Clubs, a phenomenon that experienced something of a vogue on the British Islands during the eighteenth century. Social clubs had become highly popular in eighteenth-century Britain, with clubs formed for gambling, eating beefsteaks, patronizing the arts, and collective masturbation, to mention just a few of their activities.[387] The Hell-Fire Clubs were among the most notorious and most elusive manifestations of this rage for clubbing. First reported in 1720s London and 1730s Dublin, the gutter press described them as gatherings of atheist rakes drinking to the devil and mocking the Christian religion, while later legend added further picturesque detail, such as Satanic visitations, pacts with the infernal spirit, and a chair that was always kept empty for the visiting Prince of Darkness.[388]

Blok, *The Bokkerijders Bands 1726-1776: Preliminary Notes on Brigandage in the Southern Netherlands*, Papers on European and Mediterranean Societies, no. 7 (Amsterdam: Antropologisch-Sociologisch Centrum Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1976), does not stand out for a critical treatment of its sources. For those who understand Dutch, François Van Gehuchten, *Bokkenrijders:Late heksenprocessen in Limburg. Het proces van vier bokkenrijdersgroepen in Limburg* (1773-1795) (s.l.: s.i., 2002) is as good an introduction as any.

[382] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 40-46; citing Giuseppe Orlandi, *La fede al vaglio: Quietisme, satanismo e massoneria nel Ducato di Modena tra Sette e Ottocento* (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1988).

[383] In the Rabonus band of gypsies and Christians that roamed the Dutch countryside in the late eighteenth century, new members had to swear an oath featuring the words 'now we part from Our Lord and go alive to the Devil. And now we accept the Devil as our Lord'. Cf. Florike Egmond, *Underworlds: Organized Crime in the Netherlands 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 136.

[384] Kippenberg, *Die Sage vom Herzog von Luxemburg*, 156-162; Kippenberg cites an incident dating from the Prussian-Austrian War of 1866. 'Devil, help me: body and soul I give to thee' was the common expression on these so-called 'Passauer Zettel'. Practices like these are already mentioned in the *Malleus Maleficarum*; cf. Institoris and Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 2:339-342.

[385] Kippenberg, *Die Sage vom Herzog von Luxemburg*, 149: '…nachdem wir vernünfftigere principia angenommen haben'.

[386] Kippenberg, *Die Sage vom Herzog von Luxemburg*, 171: 'So kan er das formular von einem andern abgeschmiehrt haben und sind ja leyder solche gedruckt zu finden ... obgleich inquisit sagt, er hätte dergleichen formular weder jemahls gehöret noch gelesen, so ist solches nicht zu glauben, denn wie hätte er sonst die requisita dieses pacti wissen können.'

[387] Lord, *The Hell-Fire Clubs*, 19-24, 75-95, 157-201.

In order to suppress the 'shocking impieties' of these assemblies, King George I proposed an 'Act for the More Effectual Suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaness' to the House of Lords on 29 April 1721. The House, however, rejected the bill with 60 'noes' against 34 'ayes', fearing that the new law was a potential tool for persecution instead of a simple measure against blasphemy. These fears may not have been altogether unfounded, as the bill was ghost-drafted by Archbishop Wake of Canterbury, whose primary concern was the protection of Anglican 'orthodoxy' against the upcoming tide of dissent, especially the 'Unitarianism' of Enlightenment deism.[389] Enlightenment scepticism was probably also at the root of the Hell-Fire Clubs themselves. Although not much is known about the precise proceedings at their meetings – unless we count ghost stories and sensationalist newspaper reports as accurate historic sources –recent historiography agrees that they were certainly not the devil worshippers of popular belief.[390] The English expert Evelyn Lord suggests that they were 'essentially a group of young gentlemen who met together to toast to the Devil and indulge in other sacrilegious actions', while some of them may have had 'the serious intent of discussing the existence of the Trinity'.[391]

The most famous of all Hell-Fire Clubs was never a Hell-Fire Club at all. The so-called Order of the Knights of Saint Francis, or Medmenham Friars, was founded around 1750 by Sir Francis Dashwood, an English nobleman from a respected family of landed gentry. Dashwood was already co-founder of the Dilettanti Club, which fostered interest in Italian art, as well as the short-lived Divan Club, an assembly of persons who had visited Turkey at least once. Apparently, he felt the need for an even more intimate kind of gathering, and he began to organize regular meetings of a small circle of 'knights', first at his estate at West Wycombe, afterwards at Medmenham Abbey, an old Cistercian monastery he redecorated and fitted out with a stylish garden filled with playful references to the act of procreation. Here 'sisters' were invited or imported from the London whorehouses, and each member could use his own cell for his private devotions. In the chapter room, the holy of holies inside the Abbey, more serious religious practices may have been going on (one former member spoke elusively of 'English Eleusian rites'), but there is nothing to suggest that veneration of Satan was among them. Drinking and wenching seem to have been the main occupation of the Friars of Saint Francis.[392]

During its fifteen-year-long existence, the Order of Saint Francis counted some notable figures from British public life among its members. In addition to Sir Dashwood himself and John Montagu, Fourth Earl of Sandwich (famous for the well-known lunch snack and Captain Cook's voyages), Charles Churchill, George Walpole, and John Wilkes were some-time members. The American Founding Father Benjamin Franklin was on good terms with Dashwood and may have attended some of the 'ceremonies'. The 'order' briefly sprang into the history books when its most prominent members took seats in British government, with

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388 Lord, *The Hell-Fire Clubs*, 66.

389 Lord, *The Hell-Fire Clubs*, 45-49.

390 The historiography of the Hell-Fire Clubs is comparatively well-developed. Lord's recent *The Hell-Fire Clubs* can be considered the best monograph on the subject. Geoffrey Ashe, *The Hell-Fire Clubs: A history of Anti-Morality* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2001) is a book any author would dream of writing, but alas is rather meagre in annotation and sometimes faulty in details. Gerald Suster, *The Hell-Fire Friars: Sex, Politics and Religion* (London: Robson Books, 2000), is mainly a rerun of Ashe with some Crowleyan numerology and less-than-profound philosophy thrown in. These authors basically agree on the non-existence or utter triviality of the Hell-Fire Clubs' Satanism, as do most authors writing about the history of Satanism in general (see, for instance, Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 54-55, Medway, *Lure of the Sinister*, 79-86; Schmidt, *Satanismus*, 69-71, seems less sceptical, but still designates the clubs as 'essentially pseudo-Satanist').

391 Lord, *The Hell-Fire Clubs*, 51, 72.

392 For the background of Dashwood's Order in contemporary English erotic culture, see Randolph Trumbach, 'Erotic Fantasy and Male Libertinism in Enlightenment England,' in *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800*, ed. Lynn Hunt (New York: Zone Books, 1993), 253-282.

Sir Francis Dashwood becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer. This so-called 'Hell-Fire Cabinet' did not last very long, and for the rest of his life, Sir Francis betook himself to less taxing occupations. He was a dutiful member of the House of Lords, erected a church of singular design on his domains, and made a revision of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, together with Benjamin Franklin.[393] The fame of his Brotherhood inspired a new wave of Hell-Fire Clubs, but none of these derivates came even close to Satanism in any formal sense of the word.

Another eighteenth-century household name that frequently crops up in histories of Satanism is that of Donatien Alphonse François, Marquise de Sade (1740-1814). It is abundantly clear, indeed, that the notorious pornographer-cum-philosopher was not ovelry fond of the Christian religion. After De Sade, every literary invention of sacrilege must look pale. In *Justine ou les malheurs de la vertu* (1788), for instance, the misadventurous heroine stumbles into a monastery where the inhabitants hold blasphemous, Guibourg-like masses on the buttocks of young virgins. Afterwards, the monks use the host in a way even the nuns of Louviers would not have been able to imagine. Justine herself is forced to partake of this experience. 'They take hold of me and place me at the same place as Florette; the sacrifice is consummated, and the Host… that sacred symbol of our august religion… Severino takes it in his hands, he forces it into the obscene place of his sodomizing enjoyments… he pounds it with curses… presses it with outrage under the redoubled strokes of his monstrous spear, and then spoils, while blaspheming, the impure spurts of the torrent of his lust over the holy body of his Saviour.'[394] Yet, despite the rampant antichristianity that passages like these suggest, the traditional opponent of the Christian god is almost absent in De Sade's work. Satan makes only one brief appearance, in *La philosophie dans le boudoir* ('Philosophy in the Bedroom'), where Madame Saint-Ange exclaims during orgasm: 'O Lucifer! one and only god of my soul, give me the inspiration for something that goes further, offer to my heart a new outrage, and you will see how I will plunge myself into it.'[395] Compared with the frequent invocations of the traditional deity (mostly in phrases like 'damned name of a god with whom I wipe my ass!…'), this is positively meagre. In fact, De Sade has no room for a Satan in his world, believing as he does in only one reigning principle, Nature with a capital N.[396] In dark mirror image of the optimist deism of Enlightenment theology, his god is completely indifferent to the fate of mere humans, distributing life and destruction in a wanton and amoral way. The best one can do is harmonise oneself with Nature, leave behind all morality, and find delight in the infliction of cruelty. In this ruthless and uncompromising reflection on a world without a god, De Sade's philosophy was doubtlessly groundbreaking. But Satanist it was not.

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[393] According to Ashe, *The Hell-Fire Clubs*, 178-181, Dashwood and Franklin's version of the Book of Common Prayer is still in use in American Episcopal Churches today, although Dashwood is not mentioned anymore.

[394] D. A. F. de Sade, *Justine ou les malheurs de la vertu* (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1955), 232 : 'On me saisit; on me place au même lieu que Florette; le sacrifice se consomme, et l'hostie... ce symbole sacré de notre auguste religion... Sévérino s'en saisit, il l'enfonce au local obscène de ses sodomites jouissances..., la foule avec injure..., la presse avec ignominie sous les coups redoublés de son dard monstrueux, et lance, en blasphémant, sur le corps même de son Sauveur, les flots impurs du torrent de sa lubricité!' De Sade apparently liked this scene, because he used it again in chapter ten of *Nouvelle Justine*; while in the fifth book of *Juliette*, the willing protagonist is introduced to similar pastimes by the pope himself.

[395] D. A. F. de Sade, *La philosophie dans le boudoir* (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1968), 154: 'O Lucifer! seul et unique dieu de mon âme, inspire-moi quelque chose de plus, offre à mon cœur de nouveaux écarts, et tu verras comme je m'y plongerai!'

[396] 'Es fehlt die Bezugperson des Satans,' Frick already remarks on De Sade (Frick, *Satan und Die Satanisten* 2:133). See also Russell, *Mephistopheles,* 147-149.

Chapter II
The Rehabilitation of Satan

A medieval or early modern reader would surely have been surprised if he would have been confronted with the way Satan was portrayed by some of the Romantics in the last decennia of the eighteenth and the first part of the nineteenth century. In literary works by poets like Shelley, Byron, or Hugo, and artworks by Fuseli or Blake, the great adversary of yore (as well as the mythological figures associated or identified with him, such as Lucifer and the Serpent of Paradise) was frequently depicted in a disturbingly benevolent, even heroic way. The contrast with the age-old Christian portrayal of Satan as prime mythological representative of evil could hardly be starker. While earlier 'profane' literature had occasionally featured more or less ambivalent portraits of the Devil, never before had he thus openly been shown as an object of identification, edification, even downright adulation.

This encompassed a rehabilitation of Satan in two respects. Firstly, and most obviously, while Christian mythology had blamed Satan for evil and banished him to Hell, a select number of authors and artists now professed their sympathy with the fallen angel and endeavoured to rehabilitate in some form or another, at least in the artistic domain. Secondly, and not less significantly, they resurrected him from the burial had had been given by Enlightenment rationalism, which had ridiculed or ignored Satan as an obsolete relic of superstition certainly not fit as object of hero worship. This double rehabilitation, I like to argue, represents an essential step in the emergence of modern Satanism.

In this chapter, we will trace the genesis and development of this remarkable reversal in the image of Satan. We will try to find out why this reversal occurred at precisely this moment of history and how we can understand the specific way in which it manifested itself. Finally, we will examine the question whether this reshaping of Satan can be described as religious Satanism – which would make it the first instance of modern religious Satanism – and determine the components that were most salient in the formation of the restyled Romantic Satan. In later sections, we will describe the trajectory of this new Satan in various aspects of nineteenth-century counterculture, such as political ideology, mnemohistory, and alternative religion.

the Satanic School of Poetry[397]

[397] The Romantic Satanists are somewhat neglected by historians of religious Satanism. They are either ignored (Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*), spoken about as though they had virtually no connection with the history of 'real' religious Satanism at all (Schmidt, *Satanismus*, 80-101; Frick, *Satan und die Satanisten*, 2:131-155; Medway, *Lure of the Sinister*, 12), or discussed mainly with regard to the question of whether or not they participated in Black Masses (Frick and Medway again). It is true that Schmidt (p. 84) and Medway (p. 12) present Byron and Baudelaire, respectively, as the first modern Satanist; but this does not noticeably affect their historical accounts of Satanism (compare Schmidt's conclusion about 'literarischen Satanismus' (*Satanismus*, 101): 'Mit dem Satanismuskonzepten des 20. Jahrhunderts hat dies allerdings nicht mehr allzuviel zu tun.'). Bernd U. Schipper has been one of the few authors to propose a meaningful connection between 'literary Satanism' and modern religious Satanism in his article 'From Milton to Modern Satanism: The History of the Devil and the Dynamics between Religion and Literature,' *Journal of Religion in Europe* 3 (2010) 1:103-124. while containing many insightful suggestions, his article is hardly more than a sketch, and his historical focus differs from mine. Thus, the synthesis presented in this chapter is strictly my own. I have presented important segments of this material in two earlier articles, 'Sex, Science & Liberty: The Resurrection of Satan in 19th Century (Counter) Culture,' in *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*, ed. Per Faxneld and Jesper Petersen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 41-52, and 'God, Satan, Poetry & Revolution: Literary Satanism in the

The historical genesis of the new image of Satan can be traced with some precision. During the 1780s and 1790s, a circle of Radical artists, poets, and thinkers associated with the Dissenting publisher Joseph Johnson became intrigued with the figure of the fallen archangel. Their source of inspiration was unexpected: the seventeenth-century epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1663) by John Milton, which Johnson planned to publish in a new, lavishly illustrated edition. Milton's long didactic poem, now almost exclusively read by literary scholars and historians, was widely diffused in the eighteenth century, not only in England but also abroad, where it had been translated by Voltaire, admired by Schiller and even found its way to the bookshelves of the Russian Old Believers.[398] *Paradise Lost* retold the Christian myth of Satan's insurrection and the subsequent fall of Man in verse, and although Milton had explicitly stated in the first book of his poem that it was written to 'justifie the wayes of God to men', critics had long noted the dramatic imbalance of the work.[399] Instead of Adam or Christ, it was Satan who formed the focus of Milton's story.

Most eighteenth century readers of *Paradise Lost* had considered this rather a weakness in Milton's poem.[400] For the circle of friends and radicals that centred around Johnson (comprising among others the Swiss *Sturm und Drang* painter Henry Fuseli, the etcher James Barry, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, and Thomas Paine), this was a rather different matter. For them, Satan was not the wilful usurper that was eventually reduced to a grovelling worm, but rather a personage of heroic grandeur. Johnson's sumptuous re-editon of *Paradise Lost* and the accompanying Milton Gallery he planned would have been the primary venues for this new vision of Satan. Both projects, however, failed to materialize. Among the few traces that have remained of the project are a handful of drawing and etchings by Fuseli and Barry which depict Milton's Satan as a classical hero who makes his Thermopylean stance against his creator in Greek battle outfit, defiantly raising his shield and spear towards the heavens.[401] Another trace might be a remarkable passage in *An Enquiry into Political Justice*

Nineteenth Century,' in *Breaches and Bridges in the History of European Spirituality*. Conference Proceedings, ed. by D. Bos and G. P. Freeman (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

For separate sections in this chapter, I have profusely profited from earlier scholarship; appropriate references will be given at appropriate places. Among the works dealing with the 'Satanic School of Poetry' in general, the most important for this chapter have been Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, and Max Milner's 2-volume *Le diable dans la littérature française*; furthermore the articles by Karl S. Guthke, 'Der Mythos des Bösen in der westeuropäischen Romantik,' *Colloquia Germanica. Internationale Zeitschrift für germanische Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft* (1968): 1-36, and Marilyn Butler, 'Romantic Manichaeism: Shelley's 'On the Devil, and Devils' and Byron's Mythological Dramas,' in *The Sun Is God:. Painting, Literature and Mythology in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. J.B. Bullen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 13-37. Also useful has been Peter Paul Schnierer's *Entdämonisierung und Verteufelung: Studien zur Darstellungs- und Funktionsgeschichte des Diabolischen in der englischen Literatur seit der Renaissance* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2005), particularly pp. 87-106, as well as the three impressive books on French Romanticism by Paul Bénichou, which will be quoted in later notes.

398 Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 1:211-222. On Russian vernacular editions of *Paradise Lost*, see Valentin Boss, *Milton and the Rise of Russian Satanism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), xi-xii.

399 *Paradise Lost*, Book I, line 26 (1667 edition). The majority of Miltonists maintain that this was indeed what Milton wished to do. Schipper, 'From Milton to Modern Satanism,' 114-115, postulates that Milton's *Paradise Lost* in itself already provided the essential 'paradigm shift' to allow a new appraisal of Satan; in contrary to this view, and in accordance with most of the authors cited earlier, I hold that it was the Romantic *reinterpretation* of Milton that was crucial in this respect. For some troubling questions about Milton's own 'subconscious' subversions of his message, see John Leonard's introduction to Milton's *Paradise Lost* (London, Penguin Books 2000), xxiii-xxiv, and Schnierer, *Entdämonisierung und Verteufelung*, 75-87.

400 Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 26; Peter Ackroyd, *Blake* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1995), 88. In this context it might be interesting to note that Rousseau, godfather of Romanticism and of the Revolution, expressed his admiration for Milton's 'blasphemies de Satan', while also, unsurprisingly, approving Milton's paradisiacal picture of the first human couple. Cf. Robert Sharrock, 'Godwin on Milton's Satan,' *Notes and Queries for Readers and Writers, Collectors and Librarians* 9 (December 1962) 12:463-465, there 464.

401 Gert Schiff, 'Füssli, Luzifer und die Medusa,' in *Johann Heinrich Füssli 1741-1825*, ed. Werner Hofmann

by William Godwin, a classic work of political philosophy published in 1793 and often considered as the first ideological articulation of modern anarchism. Commenting upon the Miltonic Satan, Godwin wrote:

> It must be admitted that his energies are centred too much on personal regards. But why did he rebel against his maker? It was, as he himself informs us, because he saw no sufficient reason, for that extreme inequality of rank and power, which the creator assumed. It was because prescription and precedent form no adequate ground for implicit faith. After his fall, why did he still cherish the spirit of opposition? From a persuasion that he was hardly and injuriously treated. He was not discouraged by the apparent inequality of the contest: because a sense of reason and justice was stronger in his mind, than a sense of brute force; because he had much of the feelings of an Epictetus or a Cato, and little of those of a slave. He bore his torments with fortitude, because he disdained to be subdued by despotic power. He sought revenge, because he could not think with tameness of the unexpostulating authority that sought to dispose of him.[402]

Seen in retrospect, these lines from Godwin already give the nucleus of what was to become the Romantic Satan. The small flickers of diabolical rehabilitation connected to Johnson's Milton project set in motion a chain of authors and imaginative works that together would prove decisive in the redefinition of Satan. For one thing, they might have provided inspiration to William Blake (1757-1827), a young etcher somewhat on the fringe of the Johnson circle who had been commissioned by Johnson to do some etchings for the latter's failed Milton edition.[403] Blake considered himself not only an etcher, but also an author and even a visionary. In the time remaining after finishing his etching assignments, he composed pamphlets and illuminated books, which he printed privately in his workplace by way of a complicated procedure of relief engraving, and sold or gave away to friends and visitors. In or around 1790 – the experts do not agree on the exact date – he published a slim booklet called *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. In this highly original work brimming with idiosyncratic thought, Blake completely reversed the customary evaluation of good and evil, devil and angel. 'Good is the passive that obeys reason,' he wrote, 'Evil is the active springing from energy. Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell. […] Energy is the only life and is from the Body and reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy. Energy is Eternal Delight.'[404] *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* proceeded to offer a collection of 'Proverbs from Hell' and gave diabolical reversed readings of theology, history, and philosophy in a series of 'Memorable Fancies', as well as three pages of statements by 'the voice of the devil'. The marriage in the title, as a matter of fact, was described as the dissolving of a 'good' angel into the 'flame of fire' of a devil. 'This Angel, who is now become a Devil, is my particular friend,' Blake added in a concluding note, 'We often read the Bible together in its infernal or diabolical sense which the world shall have if they behave well. I have also: The Bible of Hell: which the world shall have whether they will or no.'[405]

(München: Prestel-Verlag, 1974), 9-22; Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 31-33.

[402] William Godwin, *An Enquiry into Political Justice*, 1:261-262 (Book IV, Appendix 1); quoted from *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, ed. Mark Philp. 7 vols. (London: Pickering, 1993), 3:146. See also Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 34-35.

[403] Ackroyd, *Blake*, 134, 159.

[404] William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: With an Introduction and Commentary by Sir Geoffrey Keynes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), plates 3-4. I will henceforth refer to the original plate numbers of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, enabling the reader to find the appropriate text place in his own particular edition of Blake.

[405] Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 24. The narrator here can clearly be understood as Blake himself. This would have been the original ending of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in its earliest edition; Blake later added a 'Song of Liberty'.

It was not through direct contact with the Johnson circle, but probably by reading Godwin's *Enquiry into Political Justice* that Percy Bysshe Shelley, some twenty years later, first stumbled upon the theme of the heroic Satan. The unruly son of a British peer, Shelley was described by one of his contemporaries as a man with 'a fire in his eye, a fever in his blood, a maggot in his brain, a hectic flutter in his speech, which mark out the philosophic fanatic'.[406] After composing a provocative essay in defence of atheism, the young student-poet had ended up being expelled from Oxford. Irrevocably alienated from his sturdy (firmly?) Anglican father, he decided to devote his life to the pursuit of poetry and political activism. He was much surprised when he learned that Godwin, one of the Radical authors he had devoured, was still alive, and in Britain. He promptly decided to contact the philosopher.

Godwin, in the meantime, had fallen in dire straits and was eking out a meagre living for his family by trying to sell progressive children literature. He consequently was not averse to the unexpected overtures of his young but well-to-do aristocratic admirer. He was somewhat abashed, however, when Shelley invariable expressed glowing support for the most radical ideas in his *Enquiry into Political Justice*, many of which the philosopher had subsequently retracted. He was even more appalled when Shelley proceeded to bring his own earlier ideas about free love in practice with his own daughter Mary, eventually eloping with the sixteen-year old girl to Europe. This permanently damaged the relationship between the pioneering anarchist thinker and the radical young poet.[407]

The rupture did nothing, however, to reduce Shelley's admiration for Godwin's portrait of the Miltonic Satan. He echoed Godwin almost verbatim regarding this subject in his celebrated *A Defence of Poetry* (1820).

> Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in 'Paradise Lost'.

Shelley mused here,

> It is a mistake to suppose that he could ever have been intended for the popular personification of evil. Implacable hate, patient cunning, and a sleepless refinement of device to inflict the extremest anguish on an enemy, these things are evil; and, although venial in a slave, are not to be forgiven in a tyrant; although redeemed by much that ennobles his defeat in one subdued, are marked by all that dishonours his conquest in the victor. Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments.[408]

Earlier, Shelley had already attempted a radically reversed reading of the traditional representatives of good and evil in the prologue of a narrative poem with the long-winded title *Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden City: A Vision of the Nineteenth Century* (1817).[409] Here he describes a primordial struggle between 'a blood-red Comet and the Morning Star'. The former is victorious and establishes a reign of evil and violence, transforming the 'fair star' into 'a dire Snake, with men and beast unreconciled':[410]

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[406] Janet Todd, *Death and the Maidens: Fanny Wollstonecraft and the Shelley Circle* (London: Profile Books, 2007), 247, quoting William Hazlitt.

[407] This episode is masterfully retold in Janet Todd's *Death and the Maidens*. On Godwin, Shelley, and free love, see especially pp. 8, 91, 198.

[408] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Essays and Letters by Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Ernest Rhys (London: Walter Scott Publishing, 1905), 26-27.

[409] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Neville Rogers, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972-1975), 97-273. The poem is more generally known as *The Revolt of Islam*, a fairly deceptive title which we will consequently not adopt.

[410] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 2:119 [*Laon and Cythna*, Canto 1,26-27].

> And the great Spirit of Good did creep among
> The nations of mankind, and every tongue
> Cursed, and blasphemed him as he passed; for none
> Knew good from evil[411]

Shelley and Blake, of course, were destined to number among Britain's most celebrated poets; but this destiny was far from apparent at the time. By the beginning of the 1820s, Godwin was all but forgotten, Blake was writing down his prophecies in utter obscurity, and Shelley's musings on Satan were virtually unnoticed or stacked away in as yet unpublished notebooks. The new Satan might have remained a minor footnote in literary history, had it not been for two almost diametrically opposed factors: Lord Byron, and conservative literary criticism.

Like Shelley, George Gordon Byron, Sixth Baron Byron (1788-1824), was a very British and very aristocratic rebel. He was also a man that attracted scandal like fresh horse dung attracts flies. His marriage ended in scandalous divorce because of his even more scandalous affair with his half-sister.[412] The first cantos of his poetic travelogue *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812) had already made Byron into a celebrity poet, and the growing hue and cry about his divorce prompted him into self-declared exile to the Continent. There he teamed up with the Shelleys for a while, who likewise roamed Europe in voluntary exile, eventually ending up in Venice, the capital of Carnival. From this safe haven under the Italian sun, he kept sending poetry out to Britain that became more and more daring.

His literary opponents replied in kind; and they actually gave the new 'Romantic Satanism' public renown. The *Fortnight Quarterly* had already accused Byron of showing a 'strange predilection for the worser half of Manichaeism'. 'One of the mightiest spirits of the age,' the conservative periodical had remarked, 'has, apparently, devoted himself and his genius to the adornment and extension of evil.'[413] Even sterner language was to be found in Robert Southey's *A Vision of Judgment* (1821). Southey had been Shelley's mentor and one of the pioneering poets of Romanticism in England, together with Wordsworth and Coleridge. All three had started out as Radicals, all three had turned sane or soft in later years and had in greater or lesser degree 'gone over' to the establishment. None had done so more drastically than Southey, who had managed to become poet laureate, 'a scribbling, self-sold, soul-hired, scorn'd Iscariot', according to Byron.[414] In the introduction to *A Vision of Judgment*, the poet laureate complained about the 'flood of lascivious books' that had recently swept English literature.

> Men of diseased hearts and depraved imagination, who, forming a system of opinions to suit their own unhappy course of conduct, have rebelled against the holiest ordinances of human society, and hating that revealed religion which, with all their efforts and bravadoes, they are unable entirely to disbelieve, labour to make others as miserable as themselves, by infecting them with a moral virus that eats into the soul! The School which they have set up may properly be called the Satanic School; for though their productions breathe the spirit of Belial in their lascivious parts, and the spirit of Moloch in those loathsome images of atrocities and horrors

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[411] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 2:119 [*Laon and Cythna*, Canto 1, 28].

[412] Cf. Fiona MacCarthy, *Byron: Life and Legend* (London: John Murray, 2002), particularly 243.

[413] The Reverend Reginald Heber in the *Quarterly Review* of May 1820, quoted in Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 101.

[414] Byron, *Don Juan*, Dedication ix. 'I doubt if 'Laureate' and 'Iscariot' be good rhymes,' Byron added in a note, 'but must say, as Ben Jonson did to Sylvester, who challenged him to rhyme with –

> I, John Sylvester,
> Lay with your sister.

Jonson answered – 'I, Ben Jonson, lay with your wife.' Sylvester answered, – 'That is not rhyme.' – 'No,' said Ben Jonson; 'but it is *true*.'' [George Gordon] Lord Byron, *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 301.

> which they delight to represent, they are more especially characterized by a Satanic spirit of pride and audacious impiety, which still betrays the wretched feeling of hopelessness wherewith it is allied.[415]

This passage can be considered the official birth certificate of the Satanic School of Poetry. Southey's indictment is also at the origin of the designation 'Romantic Satanism' or 'Literary Satanism' still used by scholars of literature today (we will delve more deeply into the exact significance of these terms later). With his diatribe, the poet laureate obviously targeted Byron and Shelley, and primarily the former, who was perceived to be the evil genius of the two (of Shelley's 'Satanic' utterances the majority of critics was as yet unaware).[416]

Paradoxically enough, the constant harangues of his enemies on the theme of Satan were to inspire Byron to write his most 'Satanic' work to date. As Peter A. Schock has argued, it was only in reaction to, and in parodying identification with, the 'Satanism' attributed to him by his critics, that Byron ventured into diabolical territory.[417] In the latter half of 1821, he wrote the 'Mystery' *Cain*, according to his own statement in only three weeks and while being continuously drunk.[418] In the play (which would seldom see stage performance), Byron reconstructs the biblical account of first murder. As the root of what happened, he sees Cain's revolt against the 'politics of Paradise', the exclusion of humanity from carefree happiness.[419] Cain is stimulated in this rebellious attitude by his conversations with Lucifer, who neglects no opportunity to insinuate the malignity of the creator. 'You may suppose the small talk which takes place between him and Lucifer upon these matters is not quite canonical,' Byron wrote to a friend after finishing the play.[420] In the play's original preface, he had written defiantly: 'I am prepared to be accused of Manicheism or some other hard name ending in *ism*, which makes a formidable figure and awful sound in the eyes and ears of those who would be as much puzzled to explain the terms so bandied about as the liberal and pious indulgers in such epithets.'[421]

While conservative criticism may have provided the direct stimulus to pick up the Satanic theme, Byron could draw from two specific literary sources as well. The first of these was the tragedy *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1833), an extensive, highly philosophical poetic work of which the first part had been published in 1808. Altogether unconnected with the developments that had spawned Romantic Satanism in Britain, Goethe's tragedy recounted the early modern saga of Faust's pact with the devil, featuring a visit to the Sabbath on Brocken mountain and a disturbingly witty and clever devil called Mephistopheles. Byron greatly admired Goethe's poem; and we will see later in which measure the latter's Mephistopheles may have influenced the former's Lucifer. The second literary influence on Byron's *Cain* can surely be found in the person of Shelley; and it is through him that Byron can be connected to the slender chain of sympathy for the devil that we have described in the preceding pages. Shelley had visited Byron several times in his Italian haunt and had urged him to retaliate against his critics within the literary establishment. It is more than likely that Shelley – who was nicknamed 'The Snake' by Byron – brought the heroic, rebellious Satan of Godwin and his own writings to Byron's attention during their long discussions on politics, literature, and philosophy.[422]

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[415] Robert Southey, *A Vision of Judgement* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1821), xix-xxi.
[416] Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 78.
[417] Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 25.
[418] [George Gordon] Lord Byron and Truman Guy Steffan, *Lord Byron's Cain: Twelve Essays and a Text with Variants and Annotations* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), 4n.
[419] Byron to Thomas Moore, 19 September 1821, quoted in Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 8-9.
[420] Byron to Thomas Moore, 19 September 1821, quoted in Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 8-9.
[421] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 156. These lines from the manuscript were suppressed by Byron's publisher John Murray in the first edition of the play
[422] Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 25, 101. Shelley himself denied this influence and, in a letter to Horatio Smith

Cain fell like a bombshell when printed . Conservative reviewers at once declared it 'Hideous Blasphemy', and Byron noted with evident relish that 'the parsons are all preaching at it, from Kentish Town and Oxford to Pisa…'.[423] More is said to be printed about the 1,800 line play between 1821 and 1839 than about the 20,000 lines of Byron's magnus opus *Don Juan* (and *Don Juan*, as a matter of fact, had already been something of a scandal in itself).[424] More serious for publisher John Murray, in 1822 the court declared *Cain* blasphemous and refused to uphold copyright protection. This had the unintended consequence that the play gained even wider diffusion, both by the stimulus to its notoriety the verdict provided, and because of the fact it enabled pirate publishers to issue cheap editions without legal consequences.[425]

Being an internationally celebrated poet, and notorious as a somewhat diabolical impersonator on the side, Byron gave the new Satan wide international dissemination.[426] Most conspicuously, it crossed the Channel to France, where it was introduced to the public in *Eloa* (1823), an epic poem by the young aristocrat Alfred de Vigny (1797-1863).[427] The original title of the work had simply been *Satan*, and its further designation as 'Mystère' clearly bespoke its Byronic inspiration.[428] Whereas the Lucifer of Byron had been somewhat lonely and inhuman, De Vigny rightly concluded that no superhero can do without an enticing female companion, and duly provided Satan with one, the beautiful and virtuous female angel Eloa, who succumbs in typical nineteenth century fashion to the melancholic but irresistible charm of her infernal seducer.[429] Masked as a pale, attractive adolescent, Satan takes on the role of Eros in the soothing words he addresses to the innocent angel:

> Sur l'homme j'ai fondé mon empire de flamme
> Dans les desires du cœur, dans les rêves de l'âme,
> Dans les liens des corps, attraits mystérieux,

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from 11 April 1822, claimed that Cain had been conceived by Byron many years before (Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, 372)

[423] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, December 1821, quoted from Osterkamp, *Lucifer*, 184, and Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 339. For more about the contemporary critical reaction on *Cain*, see Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 335-381; and Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 78.

[424] At least according to Truman Guy Steffan, in Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 307.

[425] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 13-18.

[426] On Byron's international literary influence in general, see MacCarthy, *Byron*, 544-554; for Russia, see also Boss, *Milton and the Rise of Russian Satanism*, xxv, 84. French literary historians tend to be laconic about Byronic inspiration – see, for example, Paul Bénichou, *Le temps des prophètes: Doctrines de l'âge romantique* ([Paris]: Éditions Gallimard, 1977), 461 – but a short résumé can be found in Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 1:298-308.

[427] On De Vigny, see Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 1:373-401; Paul Bénichou, *Les mages romantiques* ([Paris]: Éditions Gallimard, 1988), 112-270. There were some sporadic precursors of Romantic Satanism in French literature, for instance in the obscure work *Le Mort d'Azaël ou le Rapt de Dina* (1799) by P.D. Dugat, in which Satan challenges the creator that he has done a better job with mankind: 'Tu exigeas de lui une obéissance servile, et moi seul ai dirigé le premier acte de sa volonté; Adam prévariqua du moment qu'à ma voix il fut libre.' (Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 1:232). An earlier example can be found in *Voyage autour de mon chambre* by Xavier de Maistre (émigré officer and brother to the more famous Joseph de Maistre); in this charming little book, that first saw print in 1795, De Maistre declares his 'admiration malgré moi' for Milton's Satan, despite the fact that the latter is 'un vrai démocrate, non de ceux d'Athènes, mais de ceux de Paris' – Xavier de Maistre, *Voyage autour de ma chambre* ([Paris]: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2000), 59-60 [chapitre XXXVI]. The contra-revolutionary poet René Chateaubriand, whose heroes share similar traits with those of Byron, is sometimes also ranged with the Romantic Satanists. His Satan, however, is a more or less traditional representative of evil (Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 1:233-246, particularly 244). Maximilian Rudwin, *Supernaturalism and Satanism in Chateaubriand* (Chicago: Open Court, 1922) totally seems to miss this point.

[428] Compare for further Byronic themes in *Eloa* or its sketches: Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 1:380-382, 390, 400.

[429] There were some hints for this in *Cain*, particularly in the strange magnetic attraction Lucifer seems to exert on Cain's sister Adah (Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 182 [Act I, lines 406-414]).

Dans les trésors du sang, dans les regards des yeux.
C'est moi qui fais parler l'épouse dans ses songes;
La jeune fille heureuse apprend d'heureux mensonges;
Je leur donne des nuits qui consolent des jours,
Je suis le Roi secret des secrètes amours.[430]

(Over Man I have founded my empire of fire
In the desires of the heart, the dreams of the soul,
In the bonds of the body, mysterious attractions,
In the treasure of his blood, the glance of his eyes.
It is me who makes the husband speak in his dreams;
The happy young girl hears pleasing lies;
I give them nights to comfort for their days,
I am the secret Lord of secret loves.)

Eloa enjoyed immense popularity in France.[431] Fashionable would-be Eloas wrote love letters comparing their beloved to Satan, and Théophile Gautier remarked in satirical sketch on his contemporaries that he considered himself extraordinary lucky to be blessed with a natural pale and olive-colored complexion, as this assured him of favour with the ladies because of his resulting likeness to the archdemon.[432] In an article commemorating the demise of Lord Byron in *La Muse Française*, a young poet who signed as 'Victor-M. Hugo' presented the state of French literature in the following terms: 'Two schools have formed themselves within its breast, representing the double situation in which or political troubles have left thinking people: resignation or despair. […] The first sees everything from up in heaven; the other, from the bottom of the pit. […] The first, in sum, resembles Immanuel, mild and strong, coursing over his kingdom on a chariot of lightning and light; the other is that superb Satan who swept with him such a number of stars when he was thrown out of heaven.'[433] Although the editors of the *Muse Française* took care to distance themselves from any notion of an 'École Satanique' *à la* Southey in a note appended to precisely this sentence, others were less bashful. In words closely resembling those of the British poet laureate, the influential conservative critic Auger warned against the school of Byron and consorts 'which seems to

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[430] A[lfred] de Vigny, *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. F. Baldensperger, 2 vols. (Paris : Librairie Gallimard 1950), 1:73-75. 'There you have before your eyes the work of the Malefactor/The evil one, accused by all, in truth is a Comforter,' Satan continues ('La voilà sous tes yeux l'œuvre du Malfaiteur;/Ce méchant qu'on accuse est un Consolateur.'). Several authors have argued that *Eloa* had been severely pruned by its author to prevent public outrage; see Paul Bénichou, *Le sacre de l'écrivain, 1750-1830: Essai sur l'avènement d'un pouvoir laïque dans la France moderne* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996), 360, 371-374. Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 1:373-401, does throw doubt on this fear of censorship, but earlier sketches of *Eloa* certainly show a considerable more grim antitheism.

[431] Claudius Grillet, *Le Diable dans la littérature au XIXe Siècle* (Lyon: Emmanuel Vitte, 1935), 163-164.

[432] Louis Maigron, *Le Romantisme et les mœurs: Essai d'étude historique et sociale d'après des documents inédits* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne, 1910), 231-232; Grillet, *Le Diable dans la littérature au XIXe Siècle*, 93. 'Il a les yeux de Satan. J'aime Satan', was the way romantic women talked about the man of their dreams in the 1830s, according to the satirical magazine *Figaro* (quoted in Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 1:518). On French Romantic Satanism in general during this period, see Armand Hoog, 'La révolte métaphysique et religieuse des petits romantiques,' in *Les petits romantiques français*, ed. Francis Dumont (Paris: Les Cahiers du Sud, 1949), 13-28, here 27; and Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 1:516-562.

[433] Victor Hugo, 'Sur George Gordon, Lord Byron,' in *La Muse française 1823-1824*, ed. Jules Marsan, 2 vols. (Paris: Édouard Correly, 1907) 2:297-309, here 302-303: 'Deux écoles se sont formées dans son sein, qui représentant la double situation où nos malheurs politiques ont respectivement laissé les esprits: la résignation et le désespoir. […] L'une voit tout du haut du ciel; l'autre, du fond de l'enfer. […] L'une enfin ressemble à Emmanuel, doux et fort, parcourant son royaume sur un char de foudre et de lumière; l'autre est ce superbe Satan, qui entraîna tant d'étoiles dans sa chute lorsqu'il fut précipité du ciel.'

has received its mission from Satan himself".[434] 'All this comes from Byron,' a French writer noted in 1833, 'Like smoking cigars, doing orgies, and a good many other things.'[435]

De Vigny may also have initiated another trend that seemed particularly popular in France: that of Satan's redemption. In a never-to-be-written sequel on *Eloa*, de Vigny had planned Satan to repent and find reconciliation with his Creator. In the decades that followed, countless epigones set out to write the poem that de Vigny never completed. The 'larme rédemptrice de Satan', the single tear of remorse that would reconcile Satan to the universe, almost became a literary commonplace.[436] One of the most curious excesses of this wave of cosmic epic poems may have been *La Divine Epopée* by Alexandre Soumet (1788-1845). In this poem, which purports to describe the state of the universe after the Final Judgment, a soul in heaven, Sémida, is unable to find happiness because she misses her lost love Idaméel. This eternal rebel has been thrown in Hell and even there has succeeded to take over power from Lucifer, who has grown somewhat meek with time. To bring happiness to Sémida and reconciliation to all with everything, Jesus descends into Hell and ends up crucified a second time. While few traditional Christians would have been pleased with the soteriologic acrobatics performed by Soumet, the poem seems to have been written in complete earnestness.[437]

When Victor Hugo (1802-1885) took up the theme of Satan's redemption, the French tradition of transcendental reconciliation reached its apogee.[438] We are already in the 1850s then, and the virtually unknown Victor-M. Hugo, who had written the commemorative article for Byron, had grown into the grand patriarch of French Literature. While in exile on the Channel Islands, the French poet and novelist began to compose an epic poem called *Fin de Satan*. The immense work planned to follow the devil in his career through history, culminating in his return to the open arms of the deity amidst choruses singing the praise of all-conquering love. Hugo's project would never be finished: he continued to add new material to the poem until 1860, and then seemed to have stored it away in his archives.[439] By that time, however, the Romantic Satan had grown into a well-established trope in Western culture, leaving his footprints, either distinct or faintly, in the art and literature of Russia, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Scandinavia, and America.[440]

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[434] Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, trans. Angus Davidson (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 80.

[435] Maigron, *Le Romantisme et les mœurs*, 373, citing an anonymous diary: 'Tout cela vient de Byron, comme l'usage du cigare, la pratique de l'orgie, et bien d'autres choses.'

[436] This tear could also be shed by Jesus, as in Pierre-Jean de Béranger's poem *La Fille du Diable* (1840-1841); mark that *Eloa* had also sprang into existence from one of Jesus' tears of pity.

[437] On Soumet, see Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:116-145; Grillet, *Le Diable dans la littérature au XIXe Siècle*, 167-176.

[438] On Hugo and *Fin de Satan*, see Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:358-422; Paul Zumthor, *Victor Hugo, poète de Satan* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1946). Hugo was without doubt influenced by De Vigny's earlier plans: he wrote a review of *Eloa* for the *Muse française* of May 1824 (Victor Hugo, 'Eloa ou la Sœur des Anges, mystère par le comte Alfred de Vigny,' in *La Muse française* ed. Marsan, 2:247-258), while De Vigny himself informed him about his idea for a sequel in a letter (Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 1:397). A sketch left of this project gives an ending greatly resembling that which Hugo planned for *Fin de Satan*, with the deity pardoning the devil with these words: 'Tu as été puni pendant le temps; tu as assez souffert, puisque tu fus l'ange du mal. Tu as aimé une fois: entre dans mon éternité: le mal n'existe plus.' (Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 1:398).

[439] Victor Hugo, *Le texte de 'La Fin de Satan' dans le manuscrit B.N. n.a.fr. 24.754*, ed. René Journet and Guy Robert. Contribution aux études sur Victor Hugo, no. 2. Annales Littéraires de l'Université de Besançon, no. 232 (Paris: Les Belles-Lettres, 1979), 11-27.

[440] An interesting byway, for instance, is treated in Adriana Craciun, 'Romantic Satanism and the Rise of Nineteenth-Century Women's Poetry,' *New Literary History* 34 (2004), 4:699-721. For German literature, see Osterkamp, *Lucifer*, 213-248. The very early work of the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa was also strongly influenced by Romantic Satanism: see for instance his *A Hora de Diabo*, in which Satan represents the (poetic)

God, Satan, and Revolution

Why did some of the most important Romantics suddenly start to sing praises to Satan in the nineteenth century? From where did this remarkable new appraisal of the fallen angel come, who after all had been the prime mythological representation of evil in Western civilization for more than a millennium? We cannot understand this surprising occurrence unless we take into account the wider changes that were taking place in Western society. Two groundbreaking historical developments, I would like to argue, were of paramount importance among these wider changes: revolution and secularisation. Both phenomena would bring profound changes to the face of the West, and also create new options for the appreciation of Satan.

First we will discuss the revolution . On July 14, 1789, crowds had stormed the Bastille, the well-known fortress in Paris that served as royal prison. This sparked a sequence of events in which the citizens of Paris dethroned and eventually executed their king and henceforth proceeded to govern themselves. This radical change in the political structure of one of Europe's foremost national powers became known as the French Revolution. It sent shock waves through the whole of the Western world, and eventually beyond, and can rightly be considered a turning point in modern history.

Momentous as it was, the French Revolution was no isolated event. Rather it was both the culmination of an ideological movement that had been building for many decades and the spark which ignited a whole new phase in Western culture. This chain of revolution and political renewal in Europe and the Americas has been labelled as the Western Revolution by some historians.[441] Starting with the American Revolution (1763-1783), earlier stirrings of revolutionary political upheaval had surfaced in Geneva in 1766 and 1788, in Ireland from 1782 to 1787, in the Dutch Republic from 1783 to 1787 and in the Austrian Netherlands and the prince-bishopric of Liège from 1787 to 1790. After the French Revolution (the first rumblings of which had started in 1787), revolutionary struggles for independence began to erupt in South America as well. A further series of failed or successful revolutions shook the political establishment of France and other European countries in 1831, 1848, and 1871. All these political revolts were to a lesser or greater degree motivated by a program that was rooted in Enlightenment notions: more democratic and rational ways of government, freedom for ethnic communities from 'foreign' government, freedom of press and thought, freedom of religion, sometimes coupled with radical projects for social reform. In practice, this movement for democracy and liberty was for a large part a vehicle of empowerment for the educated and well-to-do bourgeoisie, at the expense of monarchy and secular or ecclesiastical aristocracy. But the tide of revolution would give rise to a series of movements demanding emancipation and equal rights for all underprivileged groups in society, including women, the poor and working classes, and a broad scope of national, religious, and sexual minorities; a process that was to continue well into the twentieth century, and even, one might argue, up to today. Interlocked with these political upheavals, often in mutual empowerment, was a complex of ideological, social, demographic, and economic revolutions which together eventually would bring forth the specific Western form of civilisation that is sometimes branded with the loose, slightly vague designation of 'modernity'.[442]

Imagination (consulted by me in Dutch translation; Fernando Pessoa, *Het uur van de Duivel*, transl. August Willemsen (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Arbeiderspers, 2000); see also Willemsen's accompanying text on 33-53). Romantic Satanism seems to have passed by Dutch literature altogether; faint traces of it can be found in an early narrative poem by the young Herman Gorter; cf. Herman de Liagre Böll, *Herman Gorter 1864-1927: Met al mijn bloed heb ik voor U geleefd* (Amsterdam: Olympus, 2000), 47-49. We will come to speak of Italian Literary Satanism later on. For the case of Russia, see again Boss, *Milton and the Rise of Russian Satanism*.

[441] Jacques Godechot, *La Grande Nation: L'expansion révolutionnaire de la France dans le monde de 1789 à 1799* (Paris, Aubier Montaigne, 1983), 23-41.

Of all the western revolutions that made up the Western Revolution, the French Revolution undoubtedly was (in the words of the French historian Jacques Godechot) 'the most important, the most profound, the most radical'.[443] Whatever the significance of the events of 1789 in themselves, they certainly *became* significant in their reception afterwards, dichotomizing European opinion and European culture for at least a century to come. For friend and foe, the Revolution came to signify the advent of a new spirit in European man that affirmed his right to shape his own political, cultural, and religious destiny, if necessary in opposition to the 'divinely ordained' structures of tradition. Deeply internally divided as both camps might have been, the European intelligentsia would henceforth be split in 'Left' and 'Right', into those in favour of radical or 'progressive' change and those opposed to it. (As a matter of fact, the terms 'Left' and 'Right' themselves originated with the French Revolution, when the more radical members of parliament had been seated to the left of the president.)

This new dichotomy was also fundamental in revolutionizing the perception of Satan. Not that a political reading of the prince of darkness was entirely new . Milton's *Paradise Lost* and comparable works like the tragedy *Lucifer* (1654) by the Dutch playwright Joost van den Vondel, had already given an account of the fall of the archangel that had had obvious bearing on the political turmoil their countries had experienced during the seventeenth century. Yet despite the ambiguity they gave their insurrectionary protagonist for dramatic purposes, their works had been intended to defend the claims of 'divine' authority against its Satanic opponents.[444] The *philosophes* and the French Revolution, however, had given 'insurrection' a wholly new, positive meaning for substantial parts of Europe's intellectual elite; and this revaluation reflected on the myth of Satan as well. For radical sympathizers with the Revolution like Godwin and Shelley, Satan was no longer an evil insurgent against righteousness and cosmic order, but the mirror image and mythological embodiment of the revolutionary standing up against arbitrary and despotic power. Thus we should not be overmuch surprised to find out the Romantic poets that lauded Satan can invariably be located somewhere on the Leftists' side of the political spectrum. Indeed, up to the fin de siècle one can safely reverse this formula, and confidently suspect Radical inclinations as soon as an author starts to speak in a positive way about the former angel of evil.

The political setting of Romantic Satanism has already been pointed out by Max Miller with regard to French literature and by Peter A. Schock for the English context; I will summarize and occasionally elaborate their findings.[445] Right from the beginning with the Johnson circle, the link between Romantic Satanism and political radicalism had been evident. All the members of Johnson's coterie could be described as political radicals of one kind or another. Godwin was an anarchist philosopher; his wife Mary Wollstonecraft one of the first proponents of women's liberation; Thomas Paine (a later member) would participate in the French Revolution in person. They sympathized with the revolutionary stirrings that became manifest at the other side of the Channel at exactly the same time their Milton project was

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[442] Godechot, *La Grande Nation*, 23-41.

[443] Godechot, *La Grande Nation* , 37.

[444] This is especially clear in the case of Vondel, a Roman-Catholic living in the protestant-dominated Dutch Republic. His Lucifer is a disguised portrait of the statholders of Orange, who had become the de facto leaders of the Dutch insurrection against Habsburg eg. Spanish rule. The work was dedicated to Ferdinand III, the Habsburg Emperor Elect of the Holy Roman Empire, whose governance Vondel wished to see restored. (Osterkamp, *Lucifer*, 93-94, dismisses this obvious political relevance much to quick, I think, although this does not invalidate his more general social and economical analysis.)

[445] See, apart from the works already cited, also Max Milner's article 'Signification politique de la figure de Satan dans le romantisme français,' in *Romantisme et politique 1815-1851: Colloque de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure de Saint-Cloud (1966)*, ed. Louis Girard (Paris: Librarie Armand Colin, 1969), 157-163. Russell, *Mephistopheles*, 169, also pointed out the significance of the French Revolution.

conceived; and this circumstance may have been a potent factor in their reinterpretation of Milton.[446] 'Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n', had been the brazen declaration uttered by Milton's Satan from the bottom of pit: and these words must have closely echoed the state of mind of many Radicals in these specific historical circumstances.
Blake participated in these pro-revolutionary sentiments. His *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, obtuse and esoteric as it may seem, makes this quite clear. It was concluded by 'A Song to Liberty' which exhorted France to 'rend down thy dungeon' and invoked how the 'new born fire' of liberty was cast out of heaven and now dispersed (as a sort of new Holy Spirit) over the nations of the earth. When morning comes, Blake prophesised, 'the son of fire […] spurning the clouds written with curses, stamps the stony law to dust […] crying Empire is no More!'[447] Blake had planned to make his thoughts on liberty even more explicit by a long epic poem on the French Revolution that was to be published by Johnson. By that time, however, angry mobs had started to loot the houses of suspected Jacobin sympathizers in Britain and curtailing legislature against those stirring sedition had come in force. The publication of the poem was cancelled; and some authors have suggested that it was in order to avoid repercussions of this kind that Blake henceforth would choose to express himself in intricate, self-created mythologies which still puzzle scholars with regard to their interpretation.[448]

Reaction had set in full force when Shelley and Byron appeared on the scene, two or three decades later. The Revolution had ushered in the Terror, and after that Napoleonic autocracy; this in turn had been crushed by the combined forces of European monarchy. In England, the Pitt repression had stamped out the early flickers of Jacobinism; and worse was to come with the retraction of habeas corpus and the measures against blasphemous and seditious literature by the Peel Acts.[449] All over Europe, radicalism seemed to have been reduced to a powerless, persecuted minority. These circumstances made the Satanic metaphor even more apt. Satan as Milton had painted him – the great Pariah and Exile, defeated in his objects, but even from his position of abject misery defiantly continuing his opposition because of sheer inner conviction – could now be perceived as an even more adequate role model by the Romantic Radicals, marginalized as they were in their struggle against the seemingly all-powerful powers of establishment.
Shelley could certainly be called such a Romantic Radical. He was an ardent proponent of vegetarianism, free love, woman liberation, and revolutionary political reform.[450] Before eloping with Godwin's daughter Mary, he had embarked on a short-term experiment in communal living with his first wife Harriet and a school mistress, while also engaging in quixotic schemes to spread the revolutionary message, such as attaching pamphlets to hot air balloons let loose on the winds from the isolated Welsh location of his miniature commune.[451] In Dublin, he had distributed inflammatory pamphlets on the streets with a giggling Harriet

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[446] Ackroyd, *Blake*, 158.
[447] Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 24-25. That Blake adhered, generally speaking, to the ideals of the Western Revolution cannot be doubted; see for instance the short poem 'An Ancient Proverb' from the 1793 'Rossetti Manuscript' (William Blake, *Poems and Prophecies* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1924), 381): 'Remove away that black'ning church,/Remove away that marriage hearse,/Remove away that man of blood,/You'll quite remove the ancient curse.'
[448] J. Bronowski, *William Blake and the Age of Revolution* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 71.
[449] Bronowski, *William Blake*, 105; Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 88; Michael Henry Scrivener, *Radical Shelley: The Philosophical Anarchism and Utopian Thought of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 33-34.
[450] Cf. Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, 44-45. For expressions on free love and woman's liberation by Shelley, see Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 1:301-304 (*Queen Mab*, note 9), 2:140-143 (*Laon and Cythna*, Canto 2,37-43), for instance 141 (Canto 2,43): 'Can man be free if woman be a slave?'
[451] Todd, *Death and the Maidens*, 92.

in tow, one of which ended with Milton's line 'Awake! – arise! – or be forever fallen!' – the famous exhortation of Satan to the other angels thrown with him in the pit of Hell.[452] His musings on the devil only receive their full sting against a background of failed revolution and brewing social unrest, for instance when he praised Milton's Satan as morally far superior to his divine master, 'as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy.'[453] *Laon and Cythna* opened up with a quite explicit evocation of the smothered French Revolution ('When the last hope of trampled France had failed/ like a brief dream of unremaining glory,/ From visions of despair I rose') and ended with the death of its protagonists as martyrs against oppression.[454] As a matter of fact, all of Shelley's works featuring Satan or related symbolic beings are permeated with political ideology and with a millennialist expectation of the 'broad sunrise' of the future in which

> Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons – wherein,
> And besides which, by wretched men were borne
> Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
> Of reasoned wrongs glozed on by ignorance –
> Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
> The ghosts of a no more remembered fame.[455]

Byron is often thought of as an opponent of democracy, which he once characterized as an 'Aristocracy of Blackguards'.[456] Nonetheless the 'diabolical lord' was, if anything, firmly sided with the cause of radical change. Even more than his friend Shelley the 'philosophical fanatic', he managed to give his convictions practical implication. As a member of the peerage, he could take a seat in the British House of Lords, and during the short spell he did so, he voted for Catholic emancipation (according to his own statement to defend the liberty of 'five millions of the primitive') and spoke in favour of the insurrectionary working class movement of the Luddites.[457] While in Italy, he sheltered weapons for the rebellious Carbonari; and in the end, he would die while fighting for Greek independence. Saturated with scepticism as he was, Byron never was lured by grand ideological doctrines; rather he seems to have been motivated by a more general concern with 'liberty', empathically including his own, personal liberty.

Byron's political concerns are also evident in his work. Not many scholars seem to have remarked upon the political subtext of *Cain*, Byron's most 'Satanist' work.[458] Cain's dissatisfaction with 'the politics of Paradise', however, already suggests to the possibility to translate the play's biblical subject matter to contemporary society, with god functioning as a glyph for human oppression. 'Because He is all pow'rful, must all-good, too, follow?' Cain asks himself about the divine powers-that-be. More specific political commentary may be read into the play's inter-human relations, and particularly in the account of the murder of Abel. This dramatic event occurs when Abel talks the reluctant Cain into making a sacrifice unto Jehovah together. As in the biblical account of the first murder, Cain prepares an

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[452] Todd, *Death and the Maidens*, 90; Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, 383-384.
[453] Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, 26-27.
[454] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 2:111 [*Laon and Cythna*, Canto 1,1]. See also Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, 119-133.
[455] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Shelley's* Prometheus Unbound*: The Text and the Drafts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 185 [Act III, Scene 2, lines 164-169]; 'broad sunrise' from Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 2:227 [*Laon and Cythna*, Canto 9,25].
[456] Quoted in Osterkamp, *Lucifer*, 198.
[457] MacCarthy, *Byron*, 155-157; Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 160.
[458] I am unconvinced by Osterkamp's analysis of *Cain* as a dirge for the loss of power of European aristocracy (Osterkamp, *Lucifer*, 179).

offering of the fruits of the earth, while Abel slaughters some of the 'firstling of the flock'. Cain, emboldened by his preceding talks with Lucifer, then offers a 'prayer' to Jehovah in which he invites the latter to chose between the two offerings:

> If thou lov'st blood, the shepherd's shrine, which smokes
> On my right hand, hath shed it for thy service
> In the first of the flock, whose limbs now reek
> In sanguinary incense to thy skies.
> Or if the sweet and blooming fruits of earth
> And milder seasons, which the unstained turf
> I spread them on now offers in the face
> Of the broad sun which ripened them, may seem
> Good to thee, inasmuch as they have not
> Suffered in limb or life and rather form
> A sample of thy works than supplication
> To look on ours; if a shrine without victim
> And altar without gore may win thy favour,
> Look on it.[459]

When Cain's offering is scattered by a sudden whirlwind, while Abel's is consumed by flames of fire, Cain erupts in anger and declares he will built no more altars and destroy that of Abel: 'This bloody record/ Shall not stand in the sun to shame creation.'[460] His pious brother steps in to defend his place of sacrifice, 'hallowed now by the immortal pleasure of Jehovah'.[461] In a fit of rage, Cain then kills his brother with a stone from the latter's altar.

Apart from the obvious religious bearing of this scene – we will return to this aspect later on – Byron's narration can also be interpreted as an extended gloss on the French Revolution. The two themes are in fact inextricably intertwined. Cain's initial opposition is motivated by arguments that reflect the Enlightenment critique on traditional Christian religion, and his impulse to level the structures and strictures of tradition must to many of Byron's readers have been a clear pointer to the similar attempts of the French Revolution. Abel, on the other hand, can be seen as symbolic representative of the defenders of the Ancien Régime, sincere in his convictions yet in opposition of the cause of change and freedom. The French Revolution, as is well known, had indeed ushered in bloodshed and persecution against those that had sought to hold to the religious and political structures of the past. The question why human brother slew human brother is inevitably one of the important themes of Byron's play; and his account of how this violence came about can also be read as an account of why the revolutionary endeavour, despite its programmatic drive for 'fraternité' and the liberation of humanity as a whole, had nevertheless devolved into ever more bloody cycles of fratricide.

We can first discuss another aspect of *Cain* here: the fact that it gives a kind of myth of origin for the Byronic hero. This is the term used for the type of protagonist which we can see appearing in a good deal of Byron's works and which became a stock figure of Romanticism: a melancholy, isolated yet proudly independent exile burdened by some nameless crime in the past (e.g. incestuous love, or murder, or both). This personage was at the same time, of course, an archetypical portrait of Byron himself, cut loose as he was from the moral values of establishment and more or less forced to adopt a wandering existence abroad after the éclat of his relation with his half-sister (we may note in passing the obvious glee with which Byron points out the perfect innocence of Cain's 'incestuous' union with his sister). Cain clearly has all the outlines of another avatar of this Byronic hero. He is an outsider form the start by the 'fatum' of his sceptical, brooding temperament (another favourite theme with Byron) and ends up in the last act as a wanderer despairing whether he

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[459] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 241 [Act III, lines 255-268].
[460] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 244 [Act III, lines 303-304].
[461] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 243 [Act III, lines 295-296].

will ever find peace of mind. Seen in this light, *Cain* recounts the genesis of the demi-mythological Byronic hero and of his 'original sin'; and if our reading of the play has some validity, this original sin is, partially at least, brought about by (religious and political) revolt. This was certainly the way Byron was read by his conservative critics, who tended to place his work firmly in a context of political rebellion.[462] 'This evil is political as well as moral,' Southey had already said about the new 'Satanic School' in *Vision of Judgment*; and the lashing sentences in his preface were actually meant as a veiled call for legal intervention against Byron and his partners in poetic crime.[463]

The political overtones of Romantic Satanism were not less evident in the case of France, the land of revolution itself. The legacy of the 1789 Revolution, the various projects to retrieve (parts of) the revolutionary endeavour, and the subsequent reactions to these attempts at radical reform would dominate the French political and cultural landscape in the nineteenth century. In the 1820s, when the new Satan had crossed the Channel, the nation was tore between those that wanted to resume the revolutionary project in one form or another and those that wanted to restore the pre-Revolutionary status quo. The latter had the ascendancy at the time. Foreign military power had brought the Bourbons back to the throne; in their wake the exiled aristocratic and ecclesiastic retainers of the Ancien Régime had returned to positions of power. The reactionary regime actively (and, in the end, vainly) sought to resuscitate an already mythical pre-revolutionary France. Re-evangelisation of the population was forcefully stimulated; Leftist political agitation was repressed; and those that propagated the values of the Western Revolution had to sit low.
This was the immediate background against which one may read the contemporary French preoccupation with Satan, as the young Victor Hugo had accurately detected when he had suggested that 'our political problems' ('nos malheurs politiques') were at the root of this fascination.[464] The deep dichotomy that split French society may also be part of the explanation for the already mentioned popularity of poetic scenarios of cosmic reconciliation – in which, it should be noted, Satan almost invariably plays the part of intransigent revolutionary and is never wholly negatively portrayed. The coming together of the 'superb Satan' and 'mild and strong' Immanuel clearly reflected the wish of many French intellectuals to overcome the ideological divide that the Revolution had brought about within their nation. Not infrequently, moreover, the Revolution makes an even more obvious appearance. This is the case, for instance, in Hugo's unfinished *Fin de Satan*, in which the revolutionary values of liberty and human autonomy are celebrated as the essence of human existence.[465] Although at first glance the poem displays an almost traditional dualism, with God as the source of love and Satan as the material principle opposed to this, closer reading reveals a more complex agenda. Thus the real force of evil in the universe is not Satan, but the spectre Lilith-Isis-Ananké, the embodiment of Fate, or rather of the illusion of Fate. This spectre is only dissolved by the angel of Liberty, who is born from a feather from the wings of Satan left behind in heaven and brought to life by God.[466] 'The feather of Liberty falls/from the wing of Rebellion,' Hugo wrote in one of the text fragments meant for *Fin de Satan*.[467] The remaining drafts of the poem show that Hugo meant this cosmic event to

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[462] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 335-337. The *Quarterly Review* (quoted in Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 381) noted that cheap editions of Cain were circulated 'among the populace' by 'atheists and Jacobins.
[463] Southey, *Vision of Judgment*, xxi; significantly, except from being a 'tribute to the sacred memory of our late reverend Sovereign', *Vision of Judgment* is primarily a long condemnation of the French Revolution. On Southey's agenda, see Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 101.
[464] Compare Milner, 'Signification politique de Satan dans le romantisme français'; Hoog, 'La révolte métaphysique et religieuse des petits romantiques'.
[465] See for the more specific ideological background of *Fin de Satan*: Bénichou, *Les mages romantiques*, 278.
[466] Hugo, *Fin de Satan*, 86-88 [lines 1305-1372].

coincide with the fall of the Bastille in 1789. For Hugo, it seems that 1789 meant liberation from cosmic prison, not only for France, but for humanity as a whole: 'the dungeon's destruction abolishes hell'.[468]

The political and ideological situation of the nineteenth century, it may be clear by now, is essential to understand the fascination with Satan within certain circles in this period. The extent to which the work of the Romantic Satanists is permeated with politics can hardly be overestimated. Yet it would be a misrepresentation to reduce their use of satanic theme to merely a thinly coded political allegory. There was also, and not just as a mere by-the-by, an unambiguous religious aspect to their artistic employment of Satan. The metaphysical entity that was really at the focus of this religious concern, however, was not Satan at all, but rather his dualistic opponent, the god of Christian tradition.

This autonomous religious component, we should observe, was for most Romantic Satanists inseparably intertwined with their political stance. The political developments in nineteenth-century society had been an important factor in nurturing their antipathy toward Christianity and toward the Christian god. The established churches in Western Europe had generally taken stance against the Western Revolution, and most particularly against its most radical manifestation, the French Revolution. After the demise of the latter, the intertwinement of established religion and reaction had become even more intimate, especially in France, where royalist restoration and Roman-Catholic Church had embraced each other in an ideological alliance which proclaimed the inseparable union of 'throne and altar'. For the supporters of the revolutionary program, in one form or another, this made choosing a position against a religion that overtly supported law and order a logical option. But the political and religious dimensions of Romantic Satanism were linked in a much more profound way, down to the very words chosen by its proponents to describe Satan and his antagonist. Styling the deity as the 'Tyrant-god' and the 'prototype of human misrule' (to borrow a phrase from Shelley) does not only indicate that he served as a metaphor for the political oppressors on earth; it also implied that the human oppressors of nineteenth-century political reality provided the frame of reference with which they approached (and discarded) the traditional theological concept of the deity.[469] As we have seen amply demonstrated, it was this assignment of roles that enabled Satan to display his new face as the noble champion of freedom against 'despotic power' and 'unexpostulating authority'.[470]

It is worth pointing out the even more fundamental theological rift that formed the background to this development, and without which the Romantic conception of Satan would have been impossible. Charles Taylor has described how the early modern *moralization* of society, which had been fostered by Christianity itself, eventually came to be extended towards the divine realm as well. Not only man was to be judged according to the divine standards of moral good and evil, the deity itself could be subjected to such scrutiny as well. Although such discussions were not entirely novel (one only needs to leaf through the biblical book of Job to see this), they implied a departure, according to Taylor, from the more implicit religious mentality that had been prevalent in pre-modern society. In the traditional mindset, the deity had been primarily conceived as a saviour from or protector against misfortune; to judge the way in which he governed the world was beyond the pale of humanity. Now, however, the creator was increasingly called to answer when misfortune occurred.[471]

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[467] Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:411: 'La plume Liberté tombe/de l'aile Rébellion.'
[468] Hugo, *Fin de Satan*, 240: 'la prison détruite abolit le géhenne'.
[469] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 1:271 [*Queen Mab*, Book VI, line 105].
[470] Godwin, *Political and Philosophical*, 3:146.
[471] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 225, 232-233, 294.

This was not something that had started with the Romantic Satanists. In fact, we can already detect considerations like these in Milton. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton had intended to 'justifie the wayes of God to man', and although he evidently considered the divine ways as justifiable, his statement implicitly admits that this justice *could* be doubted. In the eighteenth century, the *philosophes*, and their readership in coffeehouses and *salons*, had indeed set out to place the biblical god in the dock, usually ending up with declaring him guilty. In the days of the Romantic Satanists, this verdict had been repeated with considerable verbal force by Thomas Paine, author of the *Rights of Man* (1791) and paragon of Enlightenment rationalism. 'Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled,' he wrote in *The Age of Reason* (1795), 'it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon than the word of God.'[472] More or less in passing, this disengaged, morally superior stance toward the godhead enabled the Romantic Satanists to adopt a new attitude towards the devil as well: from a threatening presence that was dreaded as bringer of misfortune par excellence, he became (quite literally) a personage playing a more or less noble role in a cosmic moral drama.

This deep antipathy against the tyrannous 'omnipotent tyrant' of (a certain) Christian tradition can be found with all the Romantic Satanists.[473] Already in 1811, Shelley had avowed his explicit intention to combat Christianity with all his intellectual vigour. 'Oh how I wish I *were* the Antichrist,' he had written to his friend Thomas Hogg in January of that year, 'that it were *mine* to crush the Demon, to hurl him back to his native Hell never to rise again. I expect to gratify some of this insatiable feeling in Poetry.'[474] The poetry he was alluding to may have been *Queen Mab* (1812-1813), Shelley's first poem on an epic scale. In the poem, a young girl is visited in her sleep by the eponymous fairy queen, who, after invoking her soul with the familiar Miltonic exhortation 'Awake! Arise!', tours her in the spirit through a fast digest of human and natural history.[475] This allows for several fierce diatribes against religion and general and the Christian faith and god in particular. The latter is denounced as a logical absurdity and a fiend who feasts on sacrifice of blood (among which that of his own son), but above all as a priestly tool for tyranny:

> They have three words: – well tyrants know their use,
> Well pay them for the loan, with usury
> Torn form a bleeding world! – God, Hell, and Heaven.[476]

Although Shelley would later disavow *Queen Mab* that it was written 'at the age of eighteenth, I daresay in a sufficiently intemperate spirit', anti-Christianity would remain a vital part of his poetic program throughout his life.[477] *Laon and Cythna* contains copious examples of similar sentiments.[478] The same applies to *Prometheus Unbound* (1820),

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[472] Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason* (1794/1795; reprint, New York: Prometheus Books, 1984), 20.
[473] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 167 [Act I, lines 138-140].
[474] Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 80.
[475] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 1:235 [*Queen Mab*, Book I, line 129].
[476] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 1 :259 [*Queen Mab*, Book IV, lines 208-210]. See also Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 1:244 [Book II, 149-61], where the Hebrew deity is called a 'Demon-God'; 1:269-271 [Book VI, 64-65]; 1:277-278 [Book VII, 106-152]; 1:269 [*Queen Mab*, note 2], 1:309-316 [note 13], 1:308-325 [note 15].
[477] Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, 339-340 [letter to *The Examiner*, 22 July 1821]. Shelley's public statement was prompted by the publication of a pirate edition of *Queen Mab*. In a private letter to John Gisborne of 16 June 1821, Shelley declared that he had only written this disavowal 'for the sake of a dignified appearance […] and really because I wish to protest against all the bad poetry in it', admitting to be 'much amused' by the 'droll circumstance' of the poem's reappearance (ibidem, 339). As a matter of fact, in his very letter to *The Examiner*, Shelley took care to emphasize that he retained his position as 'a devoted enemy to religious, political, and domestic oppression'

Shelley's last major poetical publication during his lifetime. Jupiter, who may be read in this context as a simple stand-in for the Judeo-Christian deity, is depicted here in no uncertain terms as 'Foul Tyrant of Gods and humankind', one 'who does not suffers wrong', and whose empire is founded on 'Hell's coeval, Fear'.[479] (In typical Romantic fashion, Shelley is considerably milder with regard to the figure of Jesus, who is shown to Prometheus in a vision as 'a youth with patient looks nailed to a crucifix'.[480] Prometheus, however, refrains from uttering his name ('It hath become a curse') and goes on to relate the many misdeeds done by his later adherents. In other writings, Shelley portrayed Jesus as noble teacher and martyr for truth and justice.[481])

Shelley's influence on Byron's antichristian rhetoric can be easily made probable – one only needs to point out the similarities in this respect between *Queen Mab* and *Cain*. Cain is taken on a similar tour of cosmic sightseeing by Lucifer as the one featured in Shelley's *pêche de jeunesse*; the Christian idea of the father-god sacrificing his own son is dismissed in similar fashion.[482] Yet Byron did not need Shelley to develop a marked aversion for traditional faith. The awkward combination of zealous Calvinism and sexual abuse that he had been subjected to by his nurse as a child could have been quite sufficient to engender an antichristian attitude; which together with his libertarian tendencies had instilled him with a deeply-rooted scepticism towards organised religion of every description.[483] In 1811, the same year that Shelley had expressed his wish to become the Antichrist, Byron had given voice to his own profession of anti-faith in a letter to his friend Francis Hodgson. 'I am no Platonist, I am nothing at all,' he wrote with more than a hint of irony, 'But I would sooner be a Paulician, Manichean, Spinozist, Gentile, Pyrrhonian, Zoroastrian, than one of the seventy-two villainous sects who are tearing each other to pieces for the love of the Lord and the hatred of each other. Talk of Galileeism? Show me the effects – are you better, wiser, kinder by your precepts?'[484]

It is not hard to find echoes of the moral condemnation of the deity strewn throughout the pages of *Cain*. We did already quote Cain's not so pious prayer implicitly demonizing a god that seems to ask for sacrifice of life – the lines we quoted form in fact only a small portion of an extensive set of poetic variations on this theme. As could be expected, Lucifer is even more vocal in his criticism of his divine antagonist, declaring his solidarity with all those 'who dare look the omnipotent tyrant in/ his everlasting face and tell him that/ his evil is not good!'[485] The main thrust of the play's antireligious sarcasm is reserved for the idea of a deity who 'makes but to destroy' in which we may safely recognize the Calvinist god of Byron's childhood; an 'indissoluble tyrant' who elects his helpless creatures seemingly at random to misery or happiness and who only endows them with immortality so that their torment may be eternal.[486] 'Could he but crush himself,' Lucifer ironically remarks, ''Twere the best boon/ he ever granted.'[487]

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[478] See for instance Canto 8,6; Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 2:213.

[479] Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 65 [Act I, line 265], 63 [Act I, 239], 157 [Act III, scene i, 10].

[480] Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 89 [Act I, lines 584-585].

[481] See particularly his 'Essay on Christianity', written 1816-1817 but only posthumously published; Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, 83-113.

[482] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 168-169 [Act I, lines 168-169], where Lucifer remarks about his cosmic rival:

> Perhaps he'll make
> One day a Son unto himself, as he
> Gave you a father, and if he so doth
> Mark me! that son will be a sacrifice.

These lines were suppressed in the first printing of the play.

[483] MacCarthy, *Byron*, 23.

[484] Letter to Francis Hodgson, 3 September 1811: Lord Byron, *Selected Letters and Journals* ed. Leslie A. Marchand (Cambridge, Ma.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), 53.

[485] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 167 [Act I, lines 138-140].

Blake and Hugo, the other two most important Romantic Satanists, display a more complex attitude towards metaphysical religion and Christianity (although we shall take note later of considerable complexities even with Byron and Shelley). Blake especially considered himself to be a true Christian – possibly the only true Christian left. Yet even with him there was no love lost for the certain god of a certain Christian tradition that was flagellated by Shelley and Byron and who Blake invokes in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* as the 'jealous king' whose 'stony law' is stamped to dust by the son of fire.[488] Blake seems particularly adverse to the condemnation of sensuous enjoyment that had been a prominent feature of the traditions of Latin and Western Christianity. One of the first 'errors' that are corrected by his diabolical revelation is the idea 'that God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies': instead, the Voice of the Devil declares, 'Energy is the only life', and 'Energy is Eternal Delight'.[489] 'As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys,' one of the Proverbs from Hell proclaims.[490] Blake's tone of voice is even more militant in his later 'prophecy' *America* (1793), where 'Boston's Angel', the spirit of the American Revolution, cries out his indignation against the god of conformity and hypocrisy:

> What God is he, writes laws of peace, & clothes him in a tempest
> What pitying Angel lusts for tears, and fans himself with sighs
> What crawling villain preaches abstinence & wraps himself
> In fat of lambs? no more I follow, no more obedience pay.[491]

With some variation, much the same may be said of Victor Hugo. Although the deity retains his central place as the source of good in *Fin de Satan*, this was not the 'Jehovah' of traditional Christianity, whom Hugo had come to consider a false god. The Christian dogma of eternal damnation in particular had increasingly come to evoke the poet's repulsion. This repulsion grew into an obsession when his daughter Léopoldine fell into the Seine and drowned. *Fin de Satan*, thus, was ultimately intended as a rebuttal of certain Christian notions about the deity and a momentous evocation of the ἀποκατάστασις πάντων, the reconciliation of all things, even of Satan. God is appropriately described as the 'heart' and 'loving centre' of the cosmos, radiating love with 'as many sunbeams as the Universe contains beings'.[492] Like Shelley, Hugo is not altogether negative about Jesus, the 'supreme Man' who incarnates the suffering of humanity. But towards the religion that took his name, he is much less favourably inclined. From the wood of Jesus' cross, the papal tiara grew, and 'of the murdered one, murderers were born'.[493] Indeed, Hugo points out, it was 'sinister

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[486] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 174 [Act I, line 267], 168 [Act I, 143-144].
[487] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 168 [Act I, 154-155]. These lines were suppressed in the first printing of the play.
[488] Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 26-27: it is clear from the rest of the text that Blake is alluding to the Ten Commandments here.
[489] Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 4.
[490] Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 9; see also plate 27: 'Let the Priests of the Raven of dawn no longer in deadly black, with hoarse note, curse the sons of joy. […] Nor pale religious letchery [sic] call that virginity, that wishes but acts not!' Several other poems also attest to Blake's preoccupation with this theme, for instance the famous poem 'The Garden of Love' from *Songs of Experience* (*Poems and Prophecies*, 30). On Blake and 'sexual liberation', see Ackroyd, *Blake*, 81-82, 154.
[491] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 67 (plate 11). In *Europe*, Blake called the deity 'a tyrant crowned' (Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 371), while to the end of his life, he wrote 'God is the Ghost of the Priest & King who exist whereas God exists not except from their effluvia (Quoted in Ackroyd, *Blake*, 365).
[492] '…autant de rayons que l'univers a d'êtres': Hugo, *Fin de Satan*, 210 [line 4876]. Bénichou, *Sacre de l'écrivain*, 373-374, has rightly remarked that the French epodes of 'reconciliation of Satan' implicitly encompassed not only a rehabilitation of the devil, but also of the deity, 'le Réprobateur avec son Réprouvé', in which the 'somber side' of Christianity was placed under critique and replaced by an euphoric, millennial panentheistic theology.
[493] Hugo, *Fin de Satan*, 175 [line 3894].

religion' that killed Jesus on Golgotha in the first place; and its impious priests only exploit and blaspheme the eternal name of the god of love.[494]

The four most prominent Romantic Satanists, in brief, all expressed fierce animosity towards established Christianity. In their poetry, they sought to liberate themselves and the society they lived in from a religious heritage they had come to reject. With this rejection, they did not stand alone. An increasing number of people in the West had grown disaffected with the perceptions and moral strictures of 'traditional' Christianity. 'The suspicion that the theory of what is called the Christian Church is fabulous is becoming very extensive in all countries,' Thomas Paine had already remarked in 1794.[495] The eighteenth century had witnessed the beginning of this development among the educated elite; in the century after the French Revolution, this trend would assume the proportions of a mass movement.[496]

This broader sociological process is commonly referred to as *secularisation*. As a scholarly term, this designation is prone to different interpretations. Originally signifying the expropriation of church property by secular authorities (especially in the aftermath of the French Revolution and Napoleonic conquests), secularisation has come to denote, firstly, the general disentanglement of the religious and the secular in the public sphere, and secondly, a gradual decline in adherence to established Christianity throughout the Western world.[497] We shall use both definitions throughout this study. Secularisation as a historical phenomenon, however, can *not* be simply equated with the disappearance of faith. Rather, recent scholarship maintains, it amounted to a *pluralisation* of options available in society.[498] Explicit atheism or unbelief was just one of these options, and as such certainly became increasingly vocal and visible in the nineteenth century. For most of the western population, however, and for Western culture at large, religious options that fell firmly or loosely within the pale of the Christian faith remained the preferred choice. Neither must we think of secularisation, as an older generation of sociologists and historians tended to do, as a deterministic process in which an atavistic Christianity inevitably gave way to the onset of science or a vaguely defined 'modernity'. In practical reality, even the established churches often found ways to adapt to the changing conditions of society. The increasing pluralisation and the demise of the faith as a default option sometimes instigated them into massive campaigns to mobilize their adherents, which in some regions actually led to a more intense practical participation in the Christian faith than before. We will encounter some of these movements of mobilization in later chapters.

Secularization and revolution, it is worth pointing out, were by no means entirely unconnected phenomena. The French Revolution had not only been the harbinger of the first major wave of de-christianization, but also of the first grand attempt to replace Christianity with a religious alternative, the cult of Reason.[499] The Revolutionary armies and the Napoleonic *Code civil* exported legal freedom for religious dissidence and the separation of church and state to a large part of Europe. More specifically, the values propounded by the Western Revolution in fact demanded secularisation. The freedom of conscience, of religion, and of expression that were an essential part of its program implied secularisation in the first

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[494] Hugo, *Fin de Satan*, 175 [line 4014)]; 175 [3896-3902]; 210 [4875].
[495] Paine, *Age of Reason*, 18.
[496] Taylor, *Age of Secularisation*, 437; Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century: The Gifford Lectures in the University of Edinburgh for 1973-4* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 9; Paulus Lenz-Medoc, 'Le mort de Dieu,' *Satan. Les Études Carmélitaines* 27 (1948): 611-634 .
[497] Taylor, *Age of Secularisation*, 423.
[498] Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848-1914* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 2000), 28-29, 287; Taylor, *Age of Secularisation*, among others 300.
[499] McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe*, 175, 287.

sense of the word – the disentanglement of the religious and the secular in public life in order to create a religiously 'neutral' state; in addition, it is hardly conceivable that its emphasis on human autonomy and individual liberty could lead to anything else than increasing pluriformity in the religious landscape[500]. Theoretically, it was perfectly possible to be supportive of the Western Revolution and retain one's allegiance to established Christianity. In practice, this position often made one a dissident in one's religious community, as the leadership of the established churches overwhelmingly opposed the Western revolution and what it stood for, at least during the nineteenth century. Naturally there was many a grey area in the ever un-schematic picture of historical reality. Christianity itself was in many parts a 'contested territory' in which proponents and opponents of 'revolutionary' values fought for supremacy; and this fight could have different outcomes in different places or denominations.[501] Yet, seen overall, nineteenth-century European society showed a clear fault line between old faith and new values.[502]

Seen against this canvas, the fact that prominent Romantic poets suddenly began to sing the praises of Satan can hardly be regarded as coincidence. It was a cultural signpost of major shifts that were taking form in the European consciousness. Stated baldly like this, however, this conclusion might not do full justice to the significance of the Romantic Satanists. As the British historian Hugh McLeod remarked in his seminal work on secularisation: 'Secularization happened at least in part because there were large numbers of people who were trying their hardest to bring it about.'[503] And among those who were trying their hardest, the Romantic Satanists certainly deserve pride of place. The importance of their anti-Christian poetry in this respect should not be dismissed off hand. Hugo, Shelley, and particularly Byron, were all figures of public notoriety in their days who were quite widely read.[504] Their popularity, of course, will partly have been due to the fact that they sang the song of their time. But their poetry may also have been instrumental in defining the tune of the song.

poetry, myth, and man's ultimate grounds of being[505]

Revolution and secularisation are thus the two interlinked historical developments that can be discerned behind the sudden popularity of Satan with certain Romantics (and, presumably, their public). Yet by itself, this historical framework is not sufficient to explain why they so frequently choose to adopt the figure of the fallen angle in their works of poetry and art. Appreciation of liberty and the revolutionary ethos could (and would) be expressed in other

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[500] Cf. Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind*, 26.

[501] Cf. McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe*, 50, from which I also borrowed the phrase 'contested territory'. An exemplary exception is Roman-Catholicism in the Netherlands, which embraced parliamentary democracy in order to gain legal emancipation, but apparently not altogether without genuine conviction. See Theo Salemink, 'Politischer Katholizismus in den Niederlanden,' in *Die Rolle des politischen Katholizismus in Europa im 20. Jahrhundert: Band 1*, ed. Heiner Timmermann (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2009), 161-175.

[502] McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe*, 31-51.

[503] McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe*, 29. Taylor likewise gives a brilliant apology of the importance of ideas as a historical factor on pp. 212-213 of *Age of Secularisation*.

[504] Of course, no statistical data are available; but compare Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, 7, 67-68. Blake would only be really discovered far after his death

[505] There is a wealth of literature regarding the theoretical questions connected with Romanticism. Particularly helpful for this section have been the three books by Paul Bénichou: *Le sacre de l'écrivain*; *Le temps des prophètes*; and *Les mages romantiques*. Regarding the Romantics and myth, Northrop Frye's seminal essay, *A Study of English Romanticism* (New York: Random House, 1968), and Isaiah Berlin's *The Roots of Romanticism* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001) have provided essential insights, while the article by Isaiah Berlin, 'The Romantic Revolution. A Crisis in the History of Modern Thought,' in *The Sense of Reality: Studies in Ideas and their History* (London: Pimlico, 1996), 168-193, has proved particularly valuable for my understanding of Romantic philosophy.

ways. Their criticism of traditional religion, moreover, was a recuperation of earlier antichristian tropes of the Enlightenment. Few of the Enlightenment authors, however, had felt inclined to take recourse to 'that miserable tale of the devil' (to quote Shelley once more) in order to make their point.[506]

Moreover, although it might be superfluous to point this out, it needs to be remembered that the Romantic Satanists did not appeal to Satan as a real-life, personal entity that could support them against the despised traditional deity. It is quite clear that Shelley and Byron believed as much in the existence of a real Lucifer as they believed in the existence of a Christian god. Hugo obviously did not think that the 'angel of Liberty' had really been born from a feather from the wings of Satan. And while Blake might be a more complex case, the evident symbolism of his angelic and diabolical figures and the creative liberty with which he deployed them suggests a similar suspension of literal belief. This puts them in sharp contrast, for instance, to the early modern Satanists we encountered in the previous chapter, who made appeal to the devil as a tangible cosmic presence for their own personal purposes. In this attitude of practical unbelief, the Romantic Satanists were true children of the Enlightenment as well.

Peter Schock, as a matter of fact, has argued that the demise of literal belief in Satan was an essential prerequisite for the emergence of the Romantic Satan. Only the fact that he was no longer linked to a tangible (and threatening) cosmic force but had evolved into a kind of 'free-floating symbol' enabled the Romantic Satanists to put him to novel and quite unaccustomed use in their art and poetry.[507] Yet this still does not tell us why they *wanted* to do so and choose to return to an obsolete mythological figure derived from the 'childish mummeries' (Shelley again) of biblical religion.[508] To find out why they may have been disposed to do so, we have to look deeper into their attitudes toward myth, poetry, and, ultimately, the finding or creation of meaning – three themes that were, in fact, closely interrelated to them. These attitudes were not unique for the Romantic Satanists. We can see them reflected by many of the other Romantics as well, even by those who held completely antipodal religious or ideological positions. The more extreme religious views of Blake, Shelley, Byron, and Hugo, however, make the novelty of the Romantic approach stand out more clearly. We will explore this approach in the following pages and subsequently try to discover how it implicated the work of the four major 'Satanist' poets, particularly with regard to their treatment of Satan. As we will see, the Romantic Satanists may be even more revolutionary than their mere fondness of Satan suggests.

References to the old concept of the poet as 'priest' or 'prophet' abound in the work of the Romantics. The poet, Victor Hugo wrote for instance, 'speaks as a priest to heaven and as a prophet to the earth'.[509] Like many of the Romantics' contemporaries, we tend to read utterances like these as poetic hyperbole. The Romantic poets themselves, however, were quite serious about their claims. And they might have had some justification for this. For hidden underneath this seemingly ephemeral change in the appreciation of poetry was a fundamental rift in the understanding of reality.

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[506] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 1:296 [*Queen Mab*, note 2]. See also his tongue-in-cheek treatment of the devil in his posthumously published essay *On the Devil, and Devils*: Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Shelley's 'Devils' Notebook: Bodleian MS. Shelley adds. E.9. A Facsimile Edition with Full Transcription and Textual Notes*, ed. by P. M. S. Dawson and Timothy Webb (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 40-101.

[507] Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 16-17.

[508] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 1:296 [*Queen Mab*, note 2].

[509] From 'À M. Alphonse de Lamartine,' *Odes* III, 1, cited in Bénichou, *Sacre de l'écrivain*, 385. For the roots in Antiquity and Renaissance of the idea of the poet as divine medium, see ibidem, 11-15, and Leslie A. Wilson, 'Dichter-Priester. Bestandteil der Romantik,' *Colloquia Germanica: Internationale Zeitschrift für germanische Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft* (1968): 127-136

The Enlightenment thinkers, speaking in general, had sought to change the world by demystifying it, propagating Reason as their guiding principle. Only Reason was able to unveil the falsehood of 'superstition' and 'prejudice' on the one hand, and disclose the genuine nature of the universe on the other hand. The Romantics, however, held mere 'Analytics' to be unable to create value or find meaning. Science might be able to discover how the world worked on a mechanical level, but not why it was there at all, and what it was all about, and what man should or should not do within it. Instead, the Romantics claimed that value and meaning could only be disclosed or created by the human faculty they often called 'Imagination'.[510] This word had a less frivolous connotation for the Romantics than for us today, and carried important associations with earlier Neo-Platonic and Hermetic thinking. Imagination, roughly speaking, gave men access to the world of Ideas, which is, in its original Platonic signification, ultimate truth. Imagination is also, according to conventional usage, the human ability to be truly creative, to 'imagine' things that are not present in ordinary reality (yet). The ambiguity that could be read into this concept – the fluctuation, so to say, between 'inspiration' and 'creation' – can be recognized in the work of many of the Romantics, with some considering the truly inspired poet as a mouthpiece of transcendental revelation and others moving towards an almost post-modern conception of value and meaning as constructs of human creativity.[511] In contrast to what the Enlightenment thinkers would have thought, however, circumstances did not necessarily diminish the value of the poetic imagination for the Romantics. On the contrary, it enhanced its status as the only possible source of value and meaning.

This epistemological background allows us to comprehend why 'poetry' (in its widest possible sense, including all imaginative literature, and ultimately all the arts) was the preferred vehicle of communication for the Romantics. The super-rational truths they sought to convey could never be transmitted through rational discourse. Only the language of poetry could evoke them.[512] We are now already halfway to understand how myth and the idiom of myth – as being a form of poetry and symbolic expression – could become such a favoured mode of expression for poets like Blake, Shelley, Byron, and Victor Hugo.[513] There was, however, another dimension to this tendency to 'talk myth', closely related to the Romantic notions of the poet as 'priest' and 'prophet' as well. If 'poetry' was the only genuine way to find or create meaning, it must also be the original source of religion.

In making this claim, Romanticism was in fact building on a premise regarding the origin of religion that had been wielded by Enlightenment thinking as a tool in its deconstruction of traditional faith. The Romantics, however, drew unexpected conclusions from this Enlightenment deconstruction. We can follow this clearly in Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. In plate 11, Blake gives the following digest of the origin of religion: 'The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, […] Till a System was formed, which some took advantage of & enslaved the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects; Thus began Priesthood, Choosing forms of worship from poetic

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[510] On the Imagination with the Romantics, see also Morse Peckham, 'Toward a Theory of Romanticism,' in *Romanticism: Points of View*, ed. Robert F. Gleckner and Gerald E. Enscoe (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 231-257, there 254, and Charles Larmore, *The Romantic Legacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1-30.

[511] Berlin, 'The Romantic Revolution', 178-184, and *Roots of Romanticism*, 87; H. W. Piper, *The Active Universe: Pantheism and the Concept of Imagination in the English Romantic Poets* (London: Athlone Press, 1962), 82-181; René Wellek, 'The concept of 'Romanticism' in literary history.' *Comparative Literature* 1 (1949) 1:1-23, 2:147-172, there 147, 157(n), 160, 171.

[512] The paradoxes in writing academic prose on Romantic poetry have been pointedly expressed by Bénichou, *Les mages romantiques*, 14: 'On est conduite, dans un travail comme celui-ci, à employer tour à tour, selon la circonstance, les mots ou expressions 'pensée', 'philosophie', 'religion', 'credo', 'profession de foi', 'vue des choses', 'distribution des valeurs', 'figuration', 'idéologie' même, ou tout autre terme qui convienne à l'occasion, et à tenir pour sous-entendu que le poète, quoi qu' il pense, le pense en poète.'

[513] Berlin, *Roots of Romanticism*, 120-121.

tales. And at length they pronounced that the Gods had order'd such things.' Most Enlightenment thinkers would have agreed upon this standard account of the origin of religion, and they would probably also have agreed with Blake's further statement: 'Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast.' Yet whereas the Enlightenment had used the poetic origins of myth and religion to *disqualify* both, Blake and other Romantics drew a radically different conclusion. In the following plate of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake went on to describe a conversation between the narrator and the prophet Ezekiel. After implicitly describing himself as a poet, Ezekiel declares that 'we of Israel thought that the Poetic Genius (as you know call it) was the first principle and all others merely derivative'. All gods and philosophies, the prophet continues, are only 'Tributaries' of this Poetic Genius.[514] 'I heard this with some wonder, and must confess my own conviction,' the narrator of *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* adds. There is indeed ample reason for wonder here, for Blake embarks on a complete reversal of the purport of the original Enlightenment theory. The thing that 'animates' all things and creates even the gods is the Poetic Genius – that is to say, the Imagination, as Blake and the other Romantics also called to call it; or the human faculty to find or construct value and meaning and truth beyond empirically given facts, as we may call it. We might also say: the power to formulate *religion*, to formulate conceptions about man's ultimate ground of being and general order of existence. This is the big difference with the Antique conception of the poet. While the ancients believed the gods animated and 'created' the poet, the Romantics came to believe that the poet animated and created the gods.[515] Stripped from its usurpers, the (Christian) priests, this power now returned to those to whom it originally belonged: the (Romantic) poets.

In this effort to provide mythic accounts of the ultimate grounds of human existence, the Romantic Satanists parted with Enlightenment rationalism, both by the form of their work and in the underlying assumptions on which is was built.

> I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Mans
> I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create,

Blake would write in one of his prophecies.[516] One needs only to read the work of Thomas Paine – a contemporary of Blake, but an antipodal representative of rationalism – to experience a complete difference in atmosphere. Speaking of the Old Testament prophets in *The Age of Reason*, Paine points out the old Hebrew word for 'prophet' simply signifies 'poet' – an etymology that for him needs no further elucidation as a disqualifying circumstance.[517] Reminiscing about his own youth, he subsequently remarks: 'I had some turn, and I believe some talent, for poetry; but this I rather repressed than encouraged, as leading too much into the field of imagination.'[518] No Romantic would ever have dreamt of making such a statement.
Of course, generalities like these tend to fade off into distortion. The Enlightenment had also displayed considerable fascination with myth. But its proponents had mostly approached myth as a code that needed to be cracked (and retold in rational language) or as a way to disparage the Christian 'superstition' by highlighting the 'original wisdom' of the ancient pagans (or, alternatively, by 'unmasking' Christianity as just another thinly veneered form of pagan mythology).[519] The Romantics, however, embraced myths, not as a code to be cracked, but as

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[514] Max Plowman already drew attention to this passage in his introduction to Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, xvi. For similar ideas with Wordsworth, compare Piper, *The Active Universe*, 149.
[515] Wilson, 'Dichter-Priester', 129.
[516] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 171 [*Jersualem*, plate 10]; I owe this reference to Ackroyd, *Blake*, 113.
[517] Paine, *Age of Reason*, 22: 'The case is, that the word *prophet*, to which latter times have affixed a new meaning, was the Bible word for poet, and the word *prophesying* meant the art of making poetry.'
[518] Paine, *Age of Reason*, 49.
[519] Butler, 'Romantic Manichaeism', 15-16; Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 1-26. Compare Paine, *The Age of Reason*, 12: 'The Christian theory is little else than the idolatry of the ancient Mythologists,

an adequate language to express ultimate things. This appreciation of myth as an autonomous medium of expression was certainly a breach with the Enlightenment past. There had been some precedents for this attitude, though, one of the most notable being Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), an Italian historian and political philosopher who in many respects had foreshadowed Romanticism. In his *Scienza Nova* (1725), Vico had remarked that ancient myth and poetry represented a metaphysical knowing that was 'felt and imagined' instead of 'rational and abstract like that of learned men now'; and he had praised: 'a sublimity such and so great that it excessively perturbed the very persons who by imagining did the creating, for which they were called 'poets', which is Greek for 'creators'. For this is the threefold labour of great poetry: (1) to invent sublime fables suited to the popular understanding; (2) to perturb to excess, with a view to the end proposed; (3) to teach the vulgar to act virtuously, as the poets have taught themselves.'[520]

Although I doubt if any of the Romantic Satanists had ever read Vico, this could well have been their statement of faith. Naturally, such a statement of faith did place the Romantic Satanists at deviance with the tenets of classic Enlightenment positivism: but not with Enlightenment positivism only. The reason the poet could be a priest or a prophet was that he mediated between humanity and the divine – or the sublime, or ideal, or whatever we call it – by means of his poetry. This made the Romantic poet an implicit or explicit competitor with other 'spiritual mediators' in society, among which the Christian Church held a position of predominance. With the priesthood of the old churches in discredit, the Romantics set out to demand a place of spiritual prominence for the poet, for the creative artist – in other words, for themselves. In a series of thorough studies, one of them carrying the apt title *Le sacre de l'écrivain* ('The Sacralisation of the Writer'), the French historian of literature, Paul Bénichou, has argued that this is what the Romantics were trying, and at times succeeded, to do: to become the new spiritual guides of a society that was moving towards a state of religious power vacuum.[521] The poet – he who has been endowed with 'poetic genius' – had been of yore the creator of myths of ultimate concern, accounts of first and last things and man's place in the universe. In practice or theory, or both, the Romantic Satanists were reclaiming this function.[522] The grand epic poem of cosmic scale was their great project, the work planned by all, begun by many, and finished by few. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (a 'Bible from Hell' in miniature), Blake's later 'prophecies', *Faust*, *Cain*, the epic poems of Shelley, Hugo's *Fin de Satan*, they are all works that seek to give new, comprehensive views of the cosmos by way of myth or mythical elements.[523] They represent conscious or spontaneous efforts to

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accommodated to the purposes of power and revenue; and it yet remains to reason and philosophy to abolish this amphibious fraud,' and also C.-F. Volney, *Les Ruines* (1822; reprint, Paris: Slatkine, 1979),183 [chapter 22].

[520] Giambattista Vico, *Principles of a New Science concerning the Nature of the Nations*, par. 376, quoted from Mali, *Mythistory*, 72. See pp. 70-72 (par. 375-376) for similar notions. See also Berlin, *Roots of Romanticism*, 40-51 on Hamann, Vico, et alia.

[521] Bénichou, *Sacre de l'écrivain*, 275, 469-470, *Le temps des prophètes*, 566 (on p. 423 of this older book, Bénichou is still considerably more skeptical about the religiosity of Romanticism), *Les mages romantiques*, 12-15, 533. See also the utterances of Novalis and Schelling quoted in Wilson, 'Dichter-Priester,' 135. Even with the Romantic poets who couched their attempts to fill the post-Enlightenment religious vacuum in terms of a return to traditional religion or a nostalgic yearning for the premodern Christian past (in France, for instance, the idea of the 'priest-poet' was first brought forward in contra-revolutionary literary circles – cf. Bénichou, *Le sacre de l'écrivain*, 111-192, 333), there was an implicit power conflict with the traditional mediators of meaning, the clergy or hierarchy. This conflict becomes blatantly obvious with poets who propounded radical different systems of meaning, like the Romantic Satanists.

[522] Wellek, 'The concept of Romanticism', 165; Bénichou, *Le sacre de l'écrivain*, 361; Frye, *A Study of English Romanticism*, 16; Isaiah Berlin, *Roots of Romanticism*, 122.

[523] Anyone doubting the appropriateness of the term 'myth' here should compare the scholarly definitions for myth in Mali, *Mythistory*, 4-6, or Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, *New religions as Global Culture: Making the Human Sacred* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1997), 70: 'A creative mythmaker is the example par excellence of someone who is confident that he or she has sapped the source of sacred power and, through the creation of a

furnish new 'grand narratives' for a secularising European civilization by creating new mythologies or redefining the old ones.
Despite this overt or implicit competition with established Christianity, however, we should not forget that there were important differences between the Romantic Satanists and the Christian tradition regarding the way they used the mythic form. In the first place, as we already saw, the Romantic myths were not meant to be literally true or factual accounts, as the biblical myths were held to be in Christian tradition (e.g. the incarnation and sacrificial crucifixion of Christ). Instead, they were what Northrop Frye has called 'open myths'; consciously designed systems of symbolism that used the figures of old and new mythologies as symbols or metaphors to tell a story about mankind's ultimate grounds of existence. In this respect, I'd like to emphasize once more, the Romantic Satanists were firmly post-Enlightenment. Their faith in the literal truth of the old religious language was irrevocably lost. This was the reason – Schock has certainly been right on this point – that they could adopt a traditional mythic entity like Satan and at the same time give him a radical novel interpretation. Nor were the myths of the Romantic Satanists mere allegories, mythic codes that had to be cracked to find a hard kernel of rational truth.[524] As Vico had claimed about the ancient pagan poets, the Romantic Satanists indeed wanted 'to perturb to excess'. Their poetic myths, in other words, were meant as *texts of identification*, in which the reader made his own mythic voyage in the imagination and thus discovered his place in the cosmos. Reading them is meant to be a spiritual *experience*, evoking a spiritual response. Here we can discern another important difference with the traditional Christianity that Romantic Satanism sought to override. Although most of the Romantics surely held individual and collective assumptions that we might fairly designate as dogmas, they did not offer their poetry as dogmatic texts invoking unconditional faith. Neither did they tend to form their own religious organisations – there was no Romantic church – or join existing ones.[525] The days of a 'Priesthood' declaring that 'the Gods had order'd such things' were to be overcome. What the Romantics implicitly or explicitly propagated was in fact a return to the original source of human meaning: the spiritual experience itself. In their poetry, they sought to transmit this spiritual experience, which the reader could relive by reading and re-imagining (sic) their poems.

Satan's new myths: Blake & Shelley

Although most of the Romantic Satanists were militantly antichristian, the foregoing will have made clear that this did not mean that their thoughts were also non-religious. Their poetic neo-mythologies were a symbolic form in which they tried to relate to what they thought to be the ultimate ground of their existence. How did this new spiritual investiture take form in the 'Satanist' myths of Blake, Shelley, Byron, and Hugo? What message about mankind's general order of existence did they try to convey? In the following pages, we will consider the major 'Satanist' works of these four authors in greater detail, giving special attention to the specific role played in them by Satan.
Of the four major Romantic Satanists, Blake might be the most complex case. Originating from a family of Dissenting stock, Blake remained in many ways a dissenting Christian all his life.[526] As we noted, the 'journeyman engraver of eccentric views' considered himself an adherent of true Christianity, and he would die singing hymns in joyful expectation of his

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mythological map, can show followers, too, how to find it.'

[524] In his notebook, Blake wrote that his work did not consist of 'Fable or Allegory', but of 'Vision': 'Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really and Unchangeably.' (Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 357; notes to The Last Judgment, about 1818.)

[525] Bénichou, *Le sacre de l'écrivain*, 473-474, *Temps des prophètes*, 423-424, *Les mages romantiques*, 12.

[526] Ackroyd, *Blake*, 18. On Blake's background in Dissenting Christianity, see also Mark Knight and Emma Mason, *Nineteenth-Century Religion and Literature: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 17, 42-51.

entrance into the spiritual realm. This background is also detectable in his work, including *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. A few years before he published this idiosyncratic booklet, Blake had become engrossed in the works of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), the Swedish scientist and visionary. For a while, he had been so enthusiastic about the Swede's visionary works that he had joined the local Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem (the last religious denomination, in fact, of which we know he was a member). Swedenborgianism must have attracted him in part because he perceived it as a religious option that was far removed from traditional curtailments of freedom and 'sensuous enjoyment'. 'Now it is Allowable', had been inscribed in capitals on the portal above the entrance of the Swedenborgian chapel that he visited.[527] When the English Swedenborgians began to return to moral conservatism, however, Blake grew disillusioned with the new religious movement. Subsequently, he would take a critical stance towards the ideas of Swedenborg himself as well.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell was, in part, a direct reflection of this disillusionment. In structure and content, the book was clearly intended as a satirical counterpart of *Heaven and Hell* (1758), Swedenborg's well-known account of his visionary voyages into the spiritual realm.[528] Swedenborg had not been traditional any more than Blake in his theology: the main drift of his work had been devoted to disclaim the idea of a god that sends human beings to eternal damnation and to propound a deity that is all love. It is man's own inclination to virtue that allows him to find heaven or that casts him into hell. The fire of hell is really the love of self, Swedenborg taught; the biblical 'gnashing of teeth' the continual strife and combat which this egoism generates. This he contrasted with the spiritual fire of divine love.[529] With all his doctrinal innovation, however, Swedenborg's definition of virtue had remained rather traditional. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake radically reversed the scales on Swedenborg. 'Infernal fire' now became the essence of life and of god; heaven is just a portion of this energy stolen from the abyss; moral and religious judgments are systematically reversed; and the 'hellish' fire of revolution is to be preferred above the sterile peace of a Swedenborgian heaven. Other puns on Swedenborg included the 'Memorable Fancies' strewn throughout *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, which are humorous reversals of the 'Memorable Relations' that can be found in Swedenborg's commentary on the biblical Apocalypse.[530] In addition, Swedenborg was on several occasions explicitly reprimanded in Blake's little book: the narrator depicts him as someone who had propounded 'all the old falsehoods', and his writing as 'the linen cloths folded up' in the empty tomb of resurrected Hell.[531]

Blake's most important objection against Swedenborg was not so much his moral conservatism, but the fact that the Swedish visionary was still too much 'confined' by rationalism; or, in the words of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, had only conversed with the 'religious' Angels of Reason and not with the devils of Genius.[532] Shortly before he

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[527] Ackroyd, *Blake*, 104.

[528] Schock, Romantic Satanism, 45; Jos van Meurs, 'William Blake and his Gnostic Myths,' in *Gnosis and Hermeticism. From Antiquity to Modern Times*, ed. Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 269-309, here 284. Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), 1: 335-371, downplays Blake's satire of Swedenborg and emphasizes instead the latter's positive influence.

[529] Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, chapter 59, consulted on http://www.theisticscience.org/books/hh/hh59.html, accessed 5 april 2012. Swedenborg's book was originally published in Latin as *De Coelo et Ejus Mirabilibus, et de Inferno, ex Auditis et Visis* (London, 1758).

[530] Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Apocalypse Revealed, Wherein Are Disclosed the Arcana There Foretold, Which Have Hitherto Remained Concealed*, 3 vols. (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1836), 2:76-81 [Chapter 10.484].

[531] Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 22 and plate 3. See also plate 19, where the narrator uses 'Swedenborgs volumes' as dead weight to sink back to earth from 'the glorious clime'.

[532] Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 22; see also plate 5. While the visionary content of his work

produced *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake had already expressed his objections to Enlightenment rationalism and its religious derivate, deism, in two short pamphlets – *There is No Natural Religion* (circa 1888), and *All Religions Are One* (idem). In nuce, these two self-printed leaflets contain much of the argument of his later diabolical epithalamion. 'As none by travelling over known lands can find out the unknown,' principle four of the latter pamphlet read, 'So from already acquired knowledge Man could not acquire more. Therefore an universal Poetic Genius exists.'[533] In *There is No Natural Religion*, Blake had drawn the same conclusion about the deficiency of rational, atomistic philosophy: 'He who sees he Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the ratio sees himself only.'[534]

In his subsequent works, Blake would elaborate these ideas in a poetic, mythic and artistic form more fitting to his Poetic Genius. We already quoted the 'Memorable Fancy' on plates 11-13 of *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in which Blake postulated the Poetic Genius as the origin of all religion – a poetic recapitulation, in fact, of the seven principles of *All Religions Are One*.[535] The prophetic mission of the inspired poet (representative of the Poetic Genius par excellence) was also the subject of Blake's later epic poem *Milton* (1804-1810). This remarkable work presents both an alternative cosmogony for that described by Milton in *Paradise Lost* and an account of the prophetic investiture of Blake himself, who is possessed by the spirit of prophecy and grows into a towering figure of 'fury & strength'.[536] It also tells about Milton's return to earth in order to purify himself from the Puritan errors in his poetry. Already in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake had famously portrayed the seventeenth-century author as 'a true Poet and of the Devils party without knowing it' – that is, unconsciously belonging to the 'party' representing life and imagination. In the poetic work that bears his name, Blake presents a redeemed Milton who solemnly pledges

> To cast off Bacon, Locke & Newton from Albion's covering.
> To cast off his filthy garments & clothe him with Imagination,
> To cast aside from Poetry all that is not Inspiration,
> That it no longer shall dare to mock with the aspersion of Madness.
> […]
> To cast off the idiot Questioner who is always questioning
> But never capable of answering, who sits with a sly grin
> Silent plotting when to question, like a thief in a cave,
> Who publishes doubt & calls it knowledge, whose Science is Despair[537]

Blake accompanied his verses with a full-page figure of a reborn Milton resembling the risen Christ.[538] This was no coincidence or mere artistic license, because to Blake, the true poet, exemplified by Milton, *is* the risen Christ, while the risen Christ himself was, again, the Imagination. The Imagination, after all, is what gives man access to the divine and forms the intermediary between mankind 'caverned' in its five senses and the 'real and eternal World'.[539] Without this faculty, there is no salvation for humanity. In fact, Blake claimed, the

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placed Swedenborg of course well outside the pale of strict rationalism, his 'Memorable Relations' depict him indeed as a sort of philosopher travelling through the netherworld and debating with its denizens, intent on showing the compatibility of the divine truths with the precepts of reason. Blake's 'Memorable Fancies' adopt a totally different tone, with a narrator that 'drives' his spiritual conversation partner before him and 'imposes' upon him with his 'fantasy'; 'perturbing him to excess', Vico would have said.

[533] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 5-6. Blake remarked upon the idea of 'Poetic Genius' for the first time in an annotation on a book by Swedenborg (Ackroyd, *Blake*, 103).

[534] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 4.

[535] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 5-6.

[536] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 133 [*Milton. A Prophecy*, plate 24]. The spirit of prophecy is called Los in Blake's mythology, a figure that also stands for time; cf Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 134 [plate 26].

[537] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 159-160 [*Milton*, plate 48]; I owe this reference to Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, 2:248.

[538] Blake, *Milton*, plate 16.

[539] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 255 [*Jerusalem* (1804-1820), plate 77].

Imagination is not only what brings us to the divinity, but also the divinity itself.[540] If we remind ourselves of the fact that art and the artist for Blake served as the supreme vehicle of the Imagination, this makes more sense of his seemingly hyperbolic utterances as 'Christianity is art' and 'A Poet, a Painter, a Musician, an Architect: The Man Or Woman who is not one of these is not a Christian.'[541]
In Blake's case, incidentally, the notion of the inspired poet as vehicle of the eternal world could be taken quite literally as well. While the narrator in *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* had poetically claimed that parts of the book were disclosed to him by a devil, and Blake had presented another book as dictated to him by a fairy, the poet-artist reported experiencing paranormal guidance in real life as well.[542] 'I am under the direction of Messengers from Heaven, Daily & Nightly,' he wrote to one of his patrons in 1802.[543] This does not need to imply that *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and Blake's other illustrated poems are mere products of 'mechanical revelation'. Clearly, they are carefully crafted and composed works of art. Yet for Blake, there would have been no contradiction here: one way or another, it would have been the imagination, that is: the divine, which would have spoken.[544]

If we read *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* once more after delving deeper into Blake's theology, there are two things that are striking. Firstly: the deep feeling of eschatology, of the dawning of a 'new earth' that permeates the book. In one of its first pages, Blake speaks of a 'new heaven' that has begun and 'the Eternal Hell' that revives. 'And lo!' Blake's text continues, 'Swedenborg is the Angel sitting at the tomb; his writings are the linen clothes folded up.'[545] We can now more fully understand what is meant here. Swedenborg's writings stand for the codes of 'Reason' in general, whether Newtonian science, rational philosophy, or 'systematized' theology; these are the linen clothes, the 'bound or outward circumference', around the martyred body of Energy/Life/Desire/the Imagination – all terms that form rough equivalents for Blake. The vital force, however, has now burst out of its bounds and has left its tomb. From the context, it follows that it is 'Eternal Hell' that has experienced this Christ-like resurrection; but if we remember what Blake said about Christ, we can see that here, again, there is no real contradiction, because Christ = the Imagination = the devil. Both are also Jehovah ('Know that after Christ's death, he became Jehovah,' Blake writes a few pages later).[546] At least, they are for those that consider them with the vision of the infinite; those that only can see with reason or ratio experience them as demonic, true to what Blake wrote in *There is No Natural Religion*: 'God becomes as we are.'[547] The 'god of reason' (later designated by Blake with the rather transparent homonym Urizen) is thus the true 'satan', the

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[540] 'The Eternal Body of Man is the Imagination: that is God himself/The Divine Body' – Letterpress to *Laocoön* (ca. 1820); Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 288. On plate 77 of *Jerusalem*, Blake had stated that the Imagination was the 'real and eternal World' *tout court*.
[541] Letterpress to *Laocoön* (ca. 1840); Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 290. Cf. p. 289: 'Jesus & his apostles & Disciples were all Artists', as well as p. 290: 'Prayer is the Study of Art. Praise is the Practise of Art' and 'You must leave Fathers & Mothers & Houses & Lands if they stay in the way of Art'.
[542] Ackroyd, *Blake*, 18, 111, 330. The work that dictated by a fairy is *Europe, A Prophecy* (1794); cf. Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 70.
[543] Letter to Thomas Butts, quoted in Bronowski, *Blake and the Age of Revolution*, 28-29. 'I have written this poem from immediate dictation,' he stated in a letter about *Vala, Or the Four Zoas* (1797), 'I may praise it, since I dare not pretend to be any other than the Secretary, the Authors are in Eternity.' (Quoted in Ackroyd, *Blake*, 238.)
[544] See Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 357, where Blake protests against the idea of Plato that 'Poets & Prophets do not Know or Understand what they write or Utter'. On this point, consult also Bronowski, *William Blake*, 28-29.
[545] Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 3.
[546] Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 6.
[547] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 4.

usurper who (vainly) tries to replace the true deity.[548] Yet his semblance of power will soon be over, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* prophecies. The 'cherub with his flaming sword' will leave his post with the tree of life and Adam will return to Paradise; at the same time the world will 'be consumed in fire' – a metaphor, Blake himself explains, for the purifying of our perception – and appear to mankind as it is, 'infinite and holy'. The false gods of reason will then dissolve again into the real deity of Energy/Life/Imagination etc., as the angel at the end of *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* dissolves into a devil. For the time being, 'Mental war' must be continued: but it is clear that Blake considered the 'New Age' to be on hand.[549] It remains slightly ambiguous what made the moment *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* was published so propitious for this disclosure of life-energy. Was it the rising tide of Revolution? This is suggested by the extension of the fire-metaphor to the Revolution in Blake's concluding 'Song of Liberty' ('The fire, the fire is falling!' line 11 of the poem reads).[550] Or was it Blake's own revelation that was to set humanity free?[551]

The second thing that marks Blake's mythic construct is his strong holistic views. In contrast to the traditional Christian concept of a kingdom of good opposed to a kingdom of evil, in Blake's world, everything is interrelated, and good and evil are not only relative to the speaker's vantage point ('One Law for the Lion and the Ox is Oppression'), but also necessary conditions for existence, for 'without Contraries is no progression'.[552] Here, Blake departs from the Christian tradition that sees good and evil as moral absolutes. Much more important for him is the opposition between creativity and non-creativity. From primeval times, Blake argues elsewhere in *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, there have been two classes of beings: 'the Prolific', those who create, and 'the Devouring', those 'of tame minds' that chain creativity. Both seem to be needed to keep the world going, because 'the Prolific would cease to be Prolific unless the Devourer as a sea received [sic] the excess of his delights'.[553] Seen from this angle, the *coniunctio oppositorum* to which the title of the book alludes is rather one of continual strife than blissful merger. Yet despite the apparent necessity of both sides of the cosmic medal, it is clear with what 'class' Blake's sympathies must be sought. In his subsequent works, a new duality starts to manifest itself. In *Milton*, Blake speaks of a 'Negation', which is something different from a 'Contrary': the latter are opposing 'Positives', while the Negation is 'the Reasoning Power in Man […] which must be put off and annihilated away'.[554] Once more we see appear the outlines of Blake's most detested enemies, the 'Newtonian Phantasm' of modern science (which is identified as 'Antichrist' and 'Tree of Death' in later works), as well as its appendage, the 'Mathematic Holiness' of moral religion.[555]

With these holistic and post-dualistic ideas, Blake foreshadows later, sometimes much later, currents in Western thinking and esotericism, among them important strands of modern religious Satanism. Blake himself, it must be noted, found much of these highly heterodox points of view in the writings of earlier visionaries and mystics like Paracelsus, Jakob

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[548] Compare *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 5-6!

[549] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 109 [*Milton*, Preface].

[550] Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 26.

[551] This is suggested by *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 14, and also more clearly in *Milton*, plate 24, where Blake-who-has-become-Los introduces himself as the 'Shadowy Prophet' who returns after six thousand years, which is also the time for which the 'Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations' is announced (Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 133, 161 [*Milton*, plate 24 and 50]: Los stands for Time as well as the 'Spirit of Prophecy'; see ibidem, 137 [plate 26]).

[552] Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 24, plate 3. Concerning moral relativity, see also *Milton*, plate 4 (Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 112): 'Every Man's Wisdom is peculiar to his own Individuality.'

[553] Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 16. Blake here seems to contradict the millennialist expectation of a return to paradise that erupts at other places in *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

[554] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 146 [*Milton*, plate 33], 159 [46].

[555] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 159 [*Milton*, plate 46]; 289; 149 [*Milton*, 35].

Böhme, and even Swedenborg.[556] He recombined these elements, however, on the one hand connecting them with the struggle for human emancipation that characterized the Western Revolution, while on the other hand placing them in a radically post-Enlightenment, post-rational discourse. In this context, the devil could transform into god, and god into a devil. But most essential was the fact that the true source of divinity was redefined as the human faculty to be creative.

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The contrast between William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley – self-declared to have committed deicide and author of *The Necessity of Atheism* – could at first glance not be greater. When looking closer, however, the contrast begins to appear less extreme. To begin with, Shelley's disgust for traditional Christianity and most other organised forms of religion cannot be translated into simple anti-religiosity or non-religiosity. Already in a note to *Queen Mab*, Shelley had stated that his anti-theism 'must be understood solely to affect a creative Deity', and had gone on to profess his continuing belief in a 'pervading Spirit co-eternal with the Universe'.[557] This pantheism, or rather panentheism, would remain with him throughout his life, and his later years showed a marked inclination towards some form of Neo-Platonism.

All this, nevertheless, is not what strikes one as most salient when reading Shelley's major poetical works. Rather it is the spirit of prophetic eschatology in which they are drenched, evoking with great intensity the dawn of a new age without kings, priests, and gods. For Shelley, the disappearance of the traditional concept of the deity seemed to be the most important condition for human happiness, and his belief in the imminence of this disappearance seems at least as intense as Blake's end-time expectations in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. In another note to *Queen Mab*, he had already looked forward with confidence toward the final demise of Christian faith:

> Analogy seems to favour the opinion that as, like other systems, Christianity has arisen and augmented, so like them it will decay and perish; that as violence, darkness, and deceit, not reasoning and persuasion, have procured its admission among mankind, so, when enthusiasm has subsided, and time, that infallible controverter of false opinions, has involved its pretended evidences in the darkness of antiquity, it will become obsolete; that Milton's poem alone will give permanency to the remembrance of its absurdities; and that men will laugh as heartily at grace, faith, redemption, and original sin, as they now do at the metamorphoses of Jupiter, the miracles of Romish saints, the efficacy of witchcraft, and the appearance of departed spirits.[558]

In the last part of *Queen Mab*, a visionary dream shows how the world will enter into paradisiacal splendour after priesthood and fear of the gods have dissolved: even the earth's climate, Shelley seems to suggest, will return to the conditions of the Golden Age.[559] *Laon*

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[556] Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, 1:335-371, particularly 363 and 367; Ackroyd, *Blake*, 146-149. One may also detect, however, the influence of contemporary scientific literature, for example Joseph Priestley's hypothesis of matter as energy. Compare Piper, *The Active Universe*, 31.

[557] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 1:309 [*Queen Mab*, note 13].

[558] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 1:320 [*Queen Mab*, note 15]. See also earlier in the poem, where Shelley wrote about Jehovah and his followers (*Complete Poetical Works*, 1:244; Book I, lines 158-161):

> His name and their are fading, and the tales
> Of this barbarian nation, which imposture
> Recites till terror credits, are pursuing
> Itself into forgetfulness.

[559] Cf. Piper, *The Active Universe*, 166, on Shelley's scientific sources of inspiration here.

and Cythna, although gloomier and more resigned in tone, is also prolific with references to the 'broad sunrise' of the godless future that will replace the present 'winter of the world', while the two final acts of *Prometheus Unbound* are almost entirely devoted to an ecstatic description of the future harmony of Man.[560]Paradoxically, one could call this belief a religion of secularization: a millennial faith in the fact that final happiness will alight upon mankind when all vestiges of the old religion have been erased.[561]

Despite the fact that the phrasing might be more exalted, Shelley here merely voices sentiments that had also been expressed by the more radical strand of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The Enlightenment had certainly not been free of its own millennial expectations, and we know that some of its poetical effluvia had been a direct source of inspiration for Shelley.[562] The latter's critique on religion and the power structures it supports are essentially an elaboration of the ethical and rational arguments of the eighteenth century. The point where Shelley departs from his Enlightenment mentors and approaches Blake, is in his strong convictions regarding the role of poetry and the 'imagination'. These convictions are stated quite unambiguously in his posthumously published *A Defence of Poetry* (1820). This iconic essay has become a classic of English literature and a favourite provider of stock quotes on poetry ('a poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds', etc.). To experience once more the revolutionary nature of Shelley's claims in this text, we have to remove the mental dust from his words and read them with fresh eyes again – for it is here that the inherently religious character of Shelley's poetical project becomes most clear.

Already on one of the first pages of the essay, we encounter a description on the office of the poet and the function of poetry that, despite a somewhat more sober wording, almost verbatim reflects the ideas of Blake on this subject:

> Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and the nation in which they appeared, were called, in the earliest epochs of the world, legislators or prophets: a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters. For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time. Not that I assert poets to be prophets in the gross sense of the word, or that they can foretell the form as surely as they foreknow the spirit of events: such is the pretence of superstition, which would make poetry an attribute of prophecy, rather than prophecy an attribute of poetry. A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not.[563]

The family resemblance with Blake is especially made clear by the last line, where the poet is characterized as participating in 'the eternal, the infinite, and the one' – in other words, in the divine. Here we see Shelley's panentheistic deity silently stealing in, the 'Spirit of activity and life,/That knows no term, cessation, or decay'.[564] According to Shelly, the poet is in direct contact with the spiritual breath of the universe; and it is, as with Blake, the imagination which allows him or her to be so. Without imagination, there can be no transcendence, no 'going out of our nature', and thus no love or moral feeling. In Shelley's words:

> A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his

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[560] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 2:227 [*Laon and Cythna*, Canto 9,25].

[561] This notion might be less paradoxical than one would tend to suppose. Owen Chadwick, in his Gifford Lectures on secularisation, was also struck by the many indications he had found 'that secularisation was a religious process, not an irreligious'. Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind*, 156.

[562] In particular Volney, *Les Ruins*, that displays many similarities with *Queen Mab*. Cf. Butler, 'Romantic Manichaeism', 17.

[563] Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, 5-6.

[564] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 1:272 [*Queen Mab*, Book VI, lines 148-149].

> own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause.[565]

In this way, inspired poets can be the 'unacknowledged legislators of the world', as the most celebrated phrase of the essay goes.[566] Elsewhere in his apology, Shelley upholds the supremacy of poetry over the 'grosser sciences' of the 'calculating faculty' with much the same arguments as Blake. Pointing to the social misery that seemed to accompany the technical progress of his own days, he points out that it is poetry and imagination that must lead the way for science, not only by imagining the creations which scientists afterwards copy into 'the book of common life', but also by demonstrating the moral principles without which technology will become a mere tool for exploitation and oppression.[567] 'Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science and to which all science must be referred. […] What were virtue, love patriotism, friendship – what were the scenery of this beautiful universe which we inhabit; what were our consolations on this side of the grave – and what were our aspirations beyond it, if poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar?'[568] In the end, Shelley does not hesitate to draw the same conclusion from his presuppositions as Blake had done: 'Poetry, and the principle of Self, of which money is the most visible incarnation, are the God and Mammon of the world.'[569] As we can see now, this is more than just 'poetic' hyperbole. There is consistent philosophy involved here.

Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* also contains the long passage on the 'magnificence' of Milton's Satan that we quoted earlier in this chapter. The most radical manifestation of Shelley's Romantic Satanism, however, can be found in *Laon and Cythna*, and particularly in the first 'canto' of this poem, where he sings praises of the 'Serpent', who is in reality the Morning Star – in short: Lucifer, although his name is never mentioned. This 'Great Spirit of Good' is the aspirator – or we may also say: the symbol – of all human efforts to liberty and good. Its genesis dates back to the time 'when life and thought/sprang forth […] of inessential Nought'; furthermore, he is described as speaking with the voice of nature.[570] Could we identify him as Shelley's panentheistic 'pervading Spirit coeternal with the Universe'? It sure looks like it, and Shelley here approaches a virtual deification of Satan that is every bit as radical as that in Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

The question that must immediately arise after this is: where, then, does evil come from? How is it possible that the world is not a vale of happiness under the aegis of this eternal spirit? Shelley gives a paradoxical answer to this question in *Laon and Cythna*: it is because the Spirit of Good is opposed by a Fiend who came into being together with his benign adversary, as 'Twin Genii, equal Gods', both 'immortal' and 'all-pervading'.[571] In *Laon and Cythna*, it is true, this 'spirit of evil' can be interpreted in an exclusively metaphorical way, as a tendency in the human mind or in human society (Shelley seems to identify this opposing power with 'Custom' at some point).[572] But Shelley at this time also appears to

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[565] Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, 12.
[566] Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, 41. Shelley may have been inspired for this phrase by Godwin, as well as for some of his other ideas regarding imagination: see Todd, *Death and the Maidens*, 116.
[567] Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, 30-33.
[568] Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, 33-34.
[569] Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, 33; compare Blake's 'Christianity is Art & not Money', *Lacoön*, *Poems and Prophecies*, 290. There is no indication that Shelley and Blake were familiar with each other's work, although Shelley's friend John Hunt devoted a few lines to Blake in *The Examiner*, in which he characterized him as an 'unfortunate lunatic, whose inoffensiveness secures him from confinement' (Ackroyd, *Blake*, 288).
[570] *Laon and Cythna*, Canto 1,25.
[571] *Laon and Cythna*, Canto 1,25.

have pondered the option of an ontologically independent force of evil. In another posthumously published essay, the *Essay on Christianity* that was probably written in 1817, he discussed exactly the paradox we noted above. 'According to Jesus Christ, and according to the indisputable facts of the case,' Shelley concluded, 'Some evil spirit has dominion in this perfect world. But there will come a time when the human mind shall be visited exclusively by the influences of the benignant Power.'[573] These words suggest that Shelley, at this moment, was postulating the existence of a 'satan' who had much the same function as the Christian devil: that of blanket explanation of evil and misfortune. The stark moral framework in which he appraised the world, with a clear division between the camps of evil and of good, of liberty and of oppression, may have prompted him in this direction.

Of course, this Shelleyan satan is not the same as the Christian one. On the contrary, while the Serpent is equated with the Spirit of Good, *Laon and Cythna* depicts the spirit of evil in the form of an eagle, the traditional attribute of Zeus. Behind the Greek 'father of the gods', we can immediately discern the shape of the 'Demon-God' whom Shelley had wished to destroy and whose most potent manifestation in his own society was of course the 'Jehovah' of established Christendom. Shelley's reversal of Christian cosmology here is complete. But this also entangles him in his own ideological propositions, for the god of Christianity, which he had sought to unmask as an illusion during most of his public career, now suddenly does gain ontological reality after all, be it as an evil entity. This may be the reason why Shelley does not seem to have pursued this line of thinking any further.

Let us return to Shelley's ideas about poetry once more. The thoughts on this subject already quoted make it easy to understand why Shelley might have considered his poetical and political activities as a continuum. In *A Defence of Poetry*, he had already characterized poetry as 'the most unfailing herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution'.[574] In the preface for *Laon and Cythna*, he wrote that his poem had as purpose 'kindling within the bosoms of my readers a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence nor misrepresentation nor prejudice can ever totally extinguish among mankind'.[575]

This idea to change the world with verse will have seemed less ludicrous in Shelley's days, when poetry still enjoyed a comparatively wide readership. The historical developments during Shelley's lifetime, moreover, offered new and exciting opportunities to promote change through words. The Enlightenment had taught, and the French Revolution had proven, the crucial importance of the ideological superstructure in defining the substructure of society. Kings and priests eventually only wielded power by the condescension of the people; and this condescension could be withdrawn if the people could be brought to 'change its mind'.

Myth was Shelley's favourite tool for doing so. His life project has been described by one scholar as an attempt 'to free people's minds by rewriting the world's myths and religions'.[576] Shelley's new or rewritten myths, moreover, give us some of the most striking examples of the Romantic use of myths as texts of identification. This is explicitly stated in the preface to *Laon and Cythna*, where Shelley writes that his epic poem does not attempt to offer 'methodological or systematic argument' but only seeks to 'awaken the feelings', and to this purpose will tell 'a story of human passion in its most universal character', meant to appeal

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[572] *Laon and Cythna*, Canto 1,33.
[573] Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, 91-92.
[574] Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, 40.
[575] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 2:99.
[576] Butler, 'Romantic Manichaeism', 14.

'to the common sympathies of every human breast'.[577] Yet Shelley's most magnificent attempt in this direction was without doubt *Prometheus Unbound*, his last grand effort to eliminate the Christian deity from European consciousness and bring together the themes that were essential to his thinking. Prometheus now has replaced the fallen angel as noble rebel against the tyrannous divinity, functioning as a sort of cross between Satan and Jesus, obstinate in his resistance like the former, patient in his suffering like the latter. Above all, however, he is portrayed by Shelley as great in love, due to his tremendous capability of imaginative identification with his fellow beings. Thus in Shelley's alternative version of the Greek myth, Prometheus is unbound, while not continuing in his aversion to Jupiter (which would be an implicit acknowledgment of the god's existence, and also a continuation of the mental state of hate that characterizes the 'Foul Tyrant both of Gods and humankind'), but when expressing pity even for the old god and retracting his curse.[578] Then all of a sudden, Demogorgon appears – a demonic entity that may stand here for eternity, history, or 'the terrible people' – and leads Jupiter and his entourage into oblivion. The 'painted veil' is torn, oppressive power structures all over the world collapse, and mankind enters into a stage of universal, anarchistic happiness. In entering this narrative, the reader is expected to engage imaginatively with Prometheus, re-enacting the process in the titan's psyche by which the tyrant-god is eventually dissolved and the Golden Age of Liberty begun. In doing so (Shelley hoped), the reader will also dissolve the deity from his own mind, thus starting society's march towards a future without spiritual or political oppression. The poem is thus a prophecy that brings about its own fulfilment, an 'unfailing herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution'.[579] This is certainly what Shelley hoped his poetic productions would be. 'We want the creative faculty to imagine what we know,' he wrote, 'We want the generous impulse to act that which we imagine; we want the poetry of life.'[580]

Satan's new myths: Byron & Hugo

When we open the pages of Byron, we seem to enter an atmosphere completely different from that with Blake and Shelley. We are not greeted with exalted visions of future global harmony, nor enthusiastic utterances about the prophetic role of art or revelations of the divine. Byron considered it his destiny to be a 'great statesman' in the category of Napoleon and anxiously tried to avoid the impression that writing – or 'scribbling', as he liked to call it – was anything more than a mere pastime for him (significantly, his debut volume of poetry had been titled *Hours of Idleness*). Hence his statement that *Cain* had been written in three weeks of drunkenness and never been corrected but in the proofs.[581]

Of course, we need not be deceived by this carefully constructed façade. Intoxicated writing with astonishing result also cleverly suggests the guiding hand of genius. And Byron's personal notes and letters abundantly attest to the toil that writing was for him, while the sheer extent of his œuvre indicates that he was quite serious about his business.[582] Given his ironic attitude toward his work, however, we do not need to expect extensive theoretical meditations upon the spiritual significance of poetry and art from his pen. Byron considered poetry – as far as his remaining writings tell – to be a 'reflection of life', and asserted his right to describe life as he saw and experienced it, without giving in 'to all the Cant of Christendom'.[583]

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[577] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 2:99-100.
[578] Frye, *A Study of English Romanticism*, 110-112.
[579] Shelley's words about poetry in *Defence of Poetry*: *Essays and Letters*, 40.
[580] Shelley, *Defence of Poetry*; *Essays and Letters*, 32-33.
[581] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 10(n).
[582] See for example Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 4n.

Notwithstanding this pragmatism, it is obvious that *Cain* fits squarely into the mytho-poetic effort to (re)write sacred history that we have encountered with Blake and Shelley.[584] As such, however, it is also one of the most ambiguous works of Romantic Satanism. For one, it is not as clear as sometimes suggested that the biblical god is the villain of the play and Lucifer its hero. Despite the fact that this was the common assumption of friend and foe as soon as *Cain* hit the bookshelves (thus adding to the ongoing diabolization of its author), Byron often claimed that the play was as canonical as *Paradise Lost* and that the opinions uttered by its protagonists should not be confused with those of its author.[585]

What then was Byron really trying to say with his play? Much of this depends on how we should interpret the role Byron assigns to Lucifer. *Cain*'s demonic interlocutor certainly does display key features of the rebellious Satan from the tradition of Godwin & Shelley *cum suis*. Witness his Miltonic self-affirmation 'I have a victor, true, but no superior'; witness his contempt for those that chose to be slaves, while he himself proudly prefers 'an independency of torture/To the smooth agonies of adulation'.[586] But another influence might be at least as tangible in *Cain*; namely that of Goethe, and especially Goethe's famous tragedy *Faust*. The first part of this monumental work had been published in 1808, in its original German; and although Byron spoke this language only rudimentarily, he had been introduced to *Faust* in 1816 by his fellow author Mathew Lewis, who had translated the German poem viva voce while staying with Byron as a guest.[587] The work had left a deep impression upon the diabolical lord, and his Lucifer is clearly indebted to Goethe's Mephistopheles. The sardonic comments on the human condition and general ironic aloofness that Byron attributes to the fallen angel are altogether alien to Blake and Shelley but form a conspicuous feature of Goethe's depiction of the demon that tempts Faust. That does not imply that Byron's Lucifer is simply an imitation of Mephistopheles. Goethe's devil has dimensions that are alien to Byron's creation – not only is he linked to the cosmic principle of negation and destruction, but also to the material world, for which *Cain*'s Lucifer only expresses utter contempt, deriding human beings as 'reptiles engendered out of the subsiding slime of a mighty universe' whose wants are 'gross and petty', and whose best enjoyments no more than 'a sweet degradation' and 'a filthy cheat' (we will return to this soon).[588] Both in tone and subject matter, nevertheless, Byron seems closer to Goethe that to English Romantic Radicals such as Blake and Shelley.[589]

If there is something that really stands out with Byron's Lucifer, however, it is his intimate association with the spirit of enquiry. 'Knowledge', and the discussion of its merits, is a constant theme in *Cain*. Lucifer 'tempts' Cain by offering him knowledge; and the tour which he gives the latter through past and present world includes the latest scientific findings

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[583] Byron in letters to James Hogg, 24 March [1814] and to Hobhouse & Kinnaird, 19 January 1819: *Selected Letters*, 100, 185.

[584] This was keenly acknowledged by his French translator and critic Fabre d'Olivet, who wrote: 'ce ne sont plus des individus humains que vous avez mis en scène, mais des principes cosmogoniques; ce ne sont plus des actions particulières, des opinions quelconque que vous avez exposées, mais des actes universels': Fabre d'Olivet, *Caïn, mystère dramatique en trois actes de Lord Byron, traduit en vers français et réfuté dans une suite de remarques philosophiques et critiques* (1823; reprint, Genève: Éditions Slatkine, 1981), 7.

[585] Letter to John Murray, 2 November 1821; Byron, *Selected Letters*, 280-281. Cf. Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 11 (n).

[586] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 226 [Act II, scene ii, line 429] and 181 [Act I, line 385-386].

[587] Fred Parker, 'Between Satan and Mephistopheles: Byron and the Devil,' *The Cambridge Quarterly* 35 (2006) 1:1-29, there 3-4.

[588] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 208 (Act II, scene ii, lines 97-98) and 194 (Act II, scene i, lines 54, 56-57).

[589] Byron's *The Deformed Transformed: A Drama* (1824) also features a figure called 'The Stranger' who has all the characteristics of a Mephistophelian devil, displaying the same sarcasm towards mankind. Byron, *Poetical Works*, 605-623; see especially 616 [Part I, scene ii, lines 320-332].

of Byron's days, for instance Cuvier's theses of pre-human extinct forms of life. 'I tempt none, save with the truth,' Lucifer remarks, and he places himself in explicit contrast to his divine opponent when he does not ask Cain for implicit faith, but only promises him to show him 'what thou dar'st not deny'.[590]

In historical terms, we might say that Lucifer here represents the scientific and philosophical rationalism of the Enlightenment.[591] The logical arguments wielded by him (and Cain) against a benevolent biblical creator are also those that had been brought forward by Voltaire and Percy Bysshe Shelley: the existence of seemingly purposeless suffering; the relativity of 'good' and 'evil'; the ethical absurdity of atonement through the sacrifice of the innocent.[592] The spirit of the Enlightenment seems to waft with magnificence in the final words of Lucifer to Cain, which could serve as a poetical paraphrase of Thomas Paine's 'My own mind is my own church':

> One good gift has the fatal apple giv'n –
> Your reason; let it not be over-swayed
> By tyrannous threats to force you into faith
> 'Gainst all external sense and inward feelings.
> Think and endure and form an inner world
> In your own bosom, where the outward fails.
> So shall you nearer be the spiritual
> Nature, and war triumphant with your own.[593]

Nowhere in Cain does Byron deny the validity of these arguments, which are presented as rather irrefutable. His personal notes and correspondence show that most of these points of query were solidly his own.[594] Yet these premises lead to a radically different conclusion with Byron than with the Enlightenment optimists or their Romantic progeny like Shelley. As we remarked already, we find no exalted visions of a paradisiacal future with Byron. Rather, the net result of all this analysis and doubt is the despair Blake attributed to the 'idiot Questioner' of science. Science, in *Cain*, is nowhere creative, only destructive. The disclosures of Lucifer only aggravate Cain's state of existential discontentment, leading eventually to the dissolution of the primeval human community (which, whatever its faults, was at least a community) and the murder of brother by brother. Cain is left disinherited and bereft of hope and inner peace. This is, literally, the point where the text of *Cain* ends. Nowhere does Byron, neither in Cain nor in his other work, suggest that this demise of traditional faith, however miserable in its psychological and social effects, should be avoided or reverted. Rather, it is presented as something inevitable, a 'fatum'. It is inevitable for Western man to lose his old faith after he has eaten from the tree of philosophical and scientific knowledge; it is inevitable for him to kill his pious 'inner' brother (for Abel, of course, can also be read as a lost part of the poet himself); it is inevitable that he will end up spiritual homeless.

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[590] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 170 [Act I, lines 196-197] and 192 [Act II, scene ii, 24].

[591] Parker, 'Between Satan and Mephistopheles', 11, also suggests this.

[592] Guthke, 'Der Mythos des Bösen', 17. Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 203-227 [Act II, scene ii]; see also Cain's story of the lamb bit by a snake, where the idea that evil is only a road to good is criticized; *Cain*, 218 [Act II, scene ii, lines 285-305]. Incidentally, many of these arguments would be equally valid against the providential watchmaker-god of deism; and some of them almost seem to be selected with this purpose by Byron. When Cain remains in awe before the beauty of creation, for instance, Lucifer takes him to Hades to show the mighty beings that inhabited earth in prehistory and of whom humanity is but a lesser relict – thus implicitly dispelling the notion that the universe is a perfectly made biotope for human happiness.

[593] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 227 (Act II, scene ii, lines 459-466). Paine's dictum is from *The Age of Reason*, 8.

[594] Cf. his letters to Francis Hodgson of 3 and 13 September 1811, Byron, *Selected Letters*, 52-55; 'Detached thoughts,' No. 96 (1821/1822), Byron, *Selected Letters*, 277-278; James Kennedy wrote that Byron had confided similar sentiments to him towards the end of his life; Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 168.

A contemporary critic aptly characterized this attitude as 'philosophy sitting on the ruins, weeping over its unbelief and the sad results of its science'.[595] Morse Peckham proposed the term 'negative Romanticism' for this outlook. As opposed to 'positive Romanticism', which overcomes the spiritual vacuum created by Enlightenment's destruction of faith by creating new holistic systems of meaning, negative Romanticism merely expresses the spiritual 'homelessness' brought about by the demise of traditional belief and the inadequacy of Enlightenment philosophy to fill this gap.[596] This label is certainly helpful, especially for placing Romanticism and Byron in their proper religio-historical context. Its wider applicability, however, can be debated. Firstly, of course, the terms 'positive' and 'negative' imply a value judgement that seems to me *mal à propos*. We will return to this point later. But secondly, and more importantly, if formulated in terms of mere historical position, we are in danger of missing a crucial point where Byron is on common ground with the other great Romanticists and also parts ways with most of them. In Byron's eyes, the condition of metaphysical despair he invoked was not simply due to his position at a certain point of human history. Instead, it was a veritable *condition humaine*, a common cosmic predicament. It is for a reason that he attributes this attitude, in *Cain*, to the first-born post-paradisiacal human being.

It is not just the alienation that results from doubt – or science, or rationalism – that is at issue here. The troubles of Cain arise because he fails to submit himself to his mother's admonition: 'Content thee with what is'.[597] His issue with the deity is not so much the hypothetical absurdity of the latter's existence, but the limitations of his 'politics of Paradise'. This defiance has an ethical character, roughly paraphrasable as 'what kind of god would let his creatures live in an imperfect world?' But it goes well beyond this. It is not so certain that even re-admittance into 'barren Paradise' would satisfy Cain. It is, in Byron's own words, 'the inadequacy of his state to his Conceptions' that embitters Cain, and these 'Conceptions', Byron's Mystery suggests, are inherently limitless. Even when Lucifer leads Cain to unfathomable scenes of astronomical grandeur, the latter readily acknowledges their majesty, but nevertheless goes on to describe them as 'inferior still to my desires and my conceptions'.[598]

The thing that haunts Cain is, of course, the faculty that Blake had called the Imagination, the ability which allows man to perceive 'more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover'. To this definition, Blake had already appended the conclusion that 'less than All cannot satisfy Man'.[599] Byron will not have found this idea with Blake, of whom he can have had no more than the very slightest acquaintance.[600] There are many other Romantic authors, however, who may have transmitted this central Romantic tenet to him: Wordsworth for instance, or Goethe.[601] The inherent transcendence of all human aspirations forms a central theme of the latter's *Faust*; according to Goethe, even the most elementary desires – for riches, for a beautiful girl, for power – only awaken a craving for the *more* and the *greater*, and thus eventually for the divine. That is why Faust forfeits his soul to the devil as soon as he utters the famous dictum with regard to the present moment, 'Please stay; you are so beautiful' ('Verweile doch, du bist so schön') – because it means he has given up the quest for the

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[595] '…philosophie assise sur des ruines, pleurant son incrédulité et les tristes résultats de sa science', cited in Bénichou, *Sacre de l'écrivain*, 334.

[596] Peckham, 'Toward a Theory of Romanticism', 241.

[597] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 162 [Act I, line 44].

[598] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 195 [Act II, scene i, lines 82-83].

[599] Blake, *There is No Natural Religion*; *Poems and Prophecies*, 3-4.

[600] Blake attended a dinner party of Lady Caroline Lamb, one of Byron's lovers, in 1818; Ackroyd, *Blake*, 232.

[601] On Wordsworth, compare M. H. Abrams, 'English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age,' in *Romanticism. Points of View*, ed. Robert F. Gleckner and Gerald E. Enscoe (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 314-330, there 327.

greater and wants instead to cling to the lower.[602] However, while the path of unquenchable desire for Goethe eventually ends up in unity with the divine, for Byron, its destination is unending despair. And it is Lucifer who is turned into the mouthpiece *par exellence* of this inner urge *ad sursum*.

Byron surely will have found additional inspiration for this choice in that other famous declaration of Milton's Satan:

> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.[603]

The advice to 'form an inner world in your own bosom, where the outward fails' is repeated by Byron's Lucifer on more than one occasion. 'Nothing can/Quench the mind if the mind will be itself/And centre of surrounding things.'[604] It is this faculty, Lucifer tells, that allows intelligent beings to determine what is good and what is evil; it is this, moreover, that forms the 'immortal part', the 'spiritual nature' of man.[605] And it is Cain's conspicuous bent towards the transcendental, his structural unease with his earthly existence, that made him fit for the companionship of Lucifer in the first place, so the latter declares.[606]

Byron's 'Master of spirits', it appears, is eminently spiritual in character.[607] In juxtaposition, it seems that we can tentatively identify the deity in *Cain* as the representative of physical reality. That may be why they both 'reign together' but dwell 'asunder', although both their dwelling is 'here and o'er all space'; that may be why they battle 'through all eternity', disputing each other's reign.[608] And because physical reality will never live up to the boundless aspirations of the spirit, the latter's eternity must of need be one of suffering. 'If any could desire what he is incapable of possessing, despair most be his eternal lot,' Blake had already said.[609] *Cain* seems to conclude that despair *is* indeed our eternal lot, *precisely because* of our immortal faculty of imagination. This reversal of his own doctrine of redemptive imagination was acutely detected by Blake. He reacted to *Cain* with a short work entitled *The Ghost of Abel: A Revelation in the Visions of Jehovah Seen by William Blake* (1822).[610] In its dedication to 'Lord Byron in the Wilderness', he apostrophied his fellow-prophet about his lack of faith in the power of Genius and the false dichotomy between spirit and nature he postulated. 'Can a Poet doubt the Visions of Jehovah? Nature has no Outline, but Imagination has. Nature has no Tune, but Imagination has. Nature has no Supernatural, & dissolves: Imagination is Eternity.'[611]

Is the voice of Lucifer the voice of Byron? The fallen angel undeniably represents in part its author, at least if we can say as much of Cain or earlier Byronic characters like Manfred.

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[602] [Johann Wolfgang] Goethe, *Faust: Eine Tragoedie* (München: Droemersche Verlaganstalt, 1949), 73. The second part of *Faust*, which contains the apotheosis of the story, only appeared in 1832, nine years after Byron's death. But the central theme is clear enough from part 1. It was, at least, to Shelley, who read part 1 in 1822 and remarked in a letter to his friend John Gisborne on exactly this motive. 'Perhaps all discontent with the *less* (to use a Platonic sophism), supposes the sense of a just claim to the *greater*, and that we admirers of Faust are on the right road to Paradise.' Shelley to John Gisborne, 10 April 1822; *Essays and Letters*, 368-369.

[603] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I, lines 254-255.

[604] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 171 [Act I, lines 213-215].

[605] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 186 [Act I, lines 492-496]; 165 [Act I, 103].

[606] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 170 [Act I, lines 192-193].

[607] Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 110-111, seems to miss this point when he reduces Cain's Lucifer to the voice of Reason only.

[608] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 222-223 [Act II, scene ii, lines 365-442]. Likewise, Cain's violence against Abel is in the end, according to Byron, a misguided attempt at cosmic revolt, directed 'rather against Life – and the author of Life – than the mere Living.' Byron, *Selected Letters*, 281.

[609] Blake, 'There is No Natural Religion', *Poems and Prophecies*, 3-4.

[610] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 312-315.

[611] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 312.

Lucifer seems much like a superhuman double of Cain at times, similar in their spiritual adversity, their isolation from other members of their species, and their intrinsic *tristesse* ('Sorrow seems half of his immortality,' Cain remarks about Lucifer).[612] In earlier works, Byron's protagonists express similar feelings about the inherent impossibility of happiness for human beings – at least for those human beings that have entered on the road of independent thought. As we have noted before, there is much autobiography in Byron's heroes, and the sentiments of Cain and Lucifer were certainly a reflection of his own.

We should be reluctant, however, to label this spirituality without hope as 'negative'. The melancholia that accompanies the Byronic hero who bows to god nor devil also contains an undeniable element of pride – it is brought about at least in part because he speaks from a more courageous, a more 'knowing', less naïve vantage point than ordinary humanity. 'I will have nought to do with happiness/Which humbles me and mine,' Cain declares; and Lucifer's proudly chosen 'independency of torture' can also be interpreted along these lines. Byron here masterfully extends the old *topos* of Satan as the rebel against all odds, which had been given a simple political reading by Godwin, into a much deeper symbol of our state of being. The spiritual discontent that makes us melancholic, Byron seems to tell us through Lucifer, is also the part of us that makes us eminently human. As men, we must bear our burden like men. Byron's philosophical inclinations veer closely here to the 'religion of honour' that was proposed by Alfred de Vigny, his French disciple, as the only viable spiritual path left to man in a post-Christian age.[613]

Yet even this might not exhaust the possibilities of interpretation in *Cain*. As a matter of fact, some scholars have argued that *Cain* in fact gives us the first intimations that Byron was increasingly critical of his own 'Byronic' type of heroics.[614] It is evidently true, to begin with, that the play articulates many voices, and even the voice of traditional religion is not rendered altogether without sympathy (in practical reality, Byron certainly did a much better job at imaginative identification than Shelley, whose villains always remain unremittingly villainous). Yet traditional religion is not presented as a real alternative to the fearless spirit of independence and inquiry that Lucifer advocates. Byron seems to propose a genuine third path, however, in the person of Adah, the sister-love of Cain. Like Cain, she is a first-born post-paradisiacal human (Byron here picks up a Jewish tradition according to which Cain and Abel were married to their twin sisters).[615] Despite the fact that Cain presents her as ununderstanding of 'the mind that overwhelms me', she, too, confesses to 'dissatisfied and curious thoughts' and a heart that is not tranquil ('Alas, no').[616] But her driving passion is love, an altruistic yet earthly and personal love. 'What else can joy be, but the spreading joy?' is her credo.[617] In a conversation with Cain and Adah, Lucifer explicitly demands Cain to choose between 'love and knowledge', and although the latter initially chooses knowledge, he is certainly not in every way of one accord with his diabolic guide. In some of the most moving passages of the Byron's 'Mystery', he defends the preference of his love for Adah, physical and perishable as she may be, over the lofty but disengaged individuality that Lucifer proposes.[618] Even Lucifer, at one point, declares in a Shelleyan twist that the one

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[612] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 165 [Act I, lines 95-96].

[613] Vigny, *Œuvres Complètes*, 2:942, 2:1011. On De Vigny's 'spiritualisme du séparation' which displays salient resemblances to that of Byronism, cf. Bénichou, *Sacre de l'écrivain*, 371, and also Vigny, *Œuvres Complètes*, 2:1001.

[614] Butler, 'Romantic Manichaeism', 36-37; Parker, 'Between Satan and Mephistopheles', 13-15.

[615] On this tradition, see Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 271, and Lieve M. Teugels, 'The Twin Sisters of Cain and Abel: A Survey of the Rabbinic Sources,' in *Eve's Children: The Biblical Stories Retold and Interpreted in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuizen (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 47-56.

[616] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 170 [Act I, line 189]; 181 [Act I, 404, 484].

[617] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 185 [Act I, line 481].

[618] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 216-217 [Act II, scene ii, lines 255-269]; 335 [Act II, scene ii, 337-338]. In

thing that makes him and his fellows in rebellion more happy than the solitary creator-god, is the companionship they can experience in their suffering, 'the unbounded sympathy of all with all'.[619]

It has been suggested that here Byron champions the cause of physical, earthbound, human love versus the lifeless absolutes of idealism, whether religious, philosophical, or 'Romantic' in nature. Eventually, his play ends with the remorse of its protagonist, not for his revolt against Jehovah, but because he has irrevocably severed the bond of life and love with his brother. And it ends, moreover, with Adah's decision to follow Cain into exile and share his burden out of love. The play even displays some sympathy for the idea of sacrificial atonement in this context, albeit as a voluntary act of love rather than the demand of a ruthless deity.[620] This, apparently, is the mode of being that Byron proposes for post-Christian, post-Revolutionary, and post-paradisiacal humans: a life made worthwhile by personal, earth-bound love between free and equivalent individuals (and not out of social custom or propriety, as is the root, Byron emphasizes, of Cain's affection for his father).

Byron seems to have planned to accentuate this element even more in another 'mystery' that explicitly deals with the Satanic, the unfinished closet play *Heaven and Earth* (1821). As a sort of sequel to *Cain*, it tells the story of the love between the 'daughters of men' and the 'sons of god', which served as the occasion for the fall of the angels in some apocryphal accounts (see Chapter I) and was followed, according to biblical myth, by a divinely ordained flood that destroyed most of mankind. We see Byron once again struggle with the Calvinism of his childhood in this play when he questions the humanity of a deity that destroys millions of human beings in order that 'a remnant shall be saved'. But the main theme of the three scenes that have been left to us rather appears to be the question what can make life worthwhile to us if death is eventually to engulf us all; and one of Byron's answers yet again seems to be that it is earthly love, especially between men and women, that makes even our short mortal existence preferable to 'a dead eternity'.[621] Thus Japheth, the wandering, brooding son of Noah, considers to give up his place in the saving Ark to die with the girl he loves; thus the seraphs Samiasa and Azaziel brave 'sin and fear' for the love of the mortal Anah and Aholibamah. In appropriate mythical garb, the latter instance adequately exemplifies the view that our affection for the 'human animal' (to quote Joost van den Vondel) should always overcome spiritual or ideological considerations; or that the two at least should be balanced in an equal and harmonious love-affair.

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addition, when Lucifer's disclosures make him ever more despondent, Cain protests that he sought knowledge only 'as road to happiness'; *Cain*, 215 [II, ii, 231].

[619] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 168 [Act I, line 160-166]. We should be careful before we enlist Lucifer on the side of human love here, however, because his 'unbounded love' has all the characteristics of an abstract philosophy, reminding one of Shelley's depiction of Prometheus. Byron might be covertly criticizing Shelley here. Indeed, if any living person may have functioned as the model for Byron's Lucifer, I would venture it was Shelley. See the intriguing parallels and Shelley's discontent with Byron's insufficient unchristianity mentioned by Parker, 'Between Satan and Mephistopheles', 11n. Shelley praised *Cain* as 'apocalyptic' and 'a revelation not before communicated to man' (letter to John Gisborne, 10 April 1822; *Essays and Letter*, 370), but also denied that he had had 'the smallest influence' over Byron with regard to its composition, 'and if I had, I certainly should employ it to eradicate from his great mind the delusions of Christianity, which, in spite of his reason, seems perpetually to recur, and to lay in ambush for the hours of sickness and distress' (letter to Horatio Smith, 11 April 1822; *Essays and Letters*, 372).

[620] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 232 [Act III, lines 79-86]; 255 [Act III, 510-515].

[621] Byron, *Heaven and Earth*, Part I, scene iii, line 635; *Poetical Works*, 559.

With Victor Hugo's *Fin de Satan*, we witness the last of Romantic Satanism's titanic attempts to rewrite the sacred history of the West. Hugo was a Romantic from the same mould as Blake and Shelley and had played a central role in the break-through of the new artistic movement in France. His work swarmed with allusions to the 'papacy of genius', the poet as 'sacred dreamer' or 'mysterious Sinai' (carrying 'a complete God' on his forehead), as well as to literature as a 'spiritual power'.[622] The new generation that had sprung up after the Revolution, he had written as early as 1823, demanded from the poet more than it had ever before: 'It asks him for a faith to believe in.'[623] In those days, he had put his poetic-prophetic gifts to the cause of monarchy and restoration; but in subsequent years, he had moved ever further towards the Left and towards an explicitly pro-revolutionary position. When, in one of the stranger twists of nineteenth-century history, Napoleon's nephew Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte declared himself Emperor Napoleon III after a swift coupe d'état in 1851, Hugo decided to leave the country in protest, choosing the English Channel Islands as his place of exile.

Banished to the wilderness like a modern Isaiah or Elijah, the dim outlines of his homeland barely visible on the horizon, Hugo once more pondered on his role as prophet-poet.[624] His strong urge to proclaim a new Gospel to France and the human race is already evident in a poem which he wrote in 1854, and which contains in nucleus most of the crucial elements of *Fin de Satan*:

Écoute-moi. La loi change.
Je vois poindre aux cieux l'archange!
L'Esprit du ciel
M'a crié sur la montagne:
'Tout enfer s'éteint, nul bagne
N'est éternel.'

Je ne hais plus, mer profonde.
J'aime. J'enseigne, je fonde.
Laisse passer.
Satan meurt, un autre empire
Naît, et la morsure expire
Dans un baiser.[625]

(Listen to me. The law is changing.
I saw the archangel appear in the heavens!
The Spirit of heaven
Cried to me upon the mountain:
'Every hell will be extinguished, no prison
Is eternal.'

I do not hate anymore, deep sea.
I love. I teach, I lay new foundations.
Let it all pass.
Satan dies, a different empire
Is born, and the biting teeth expire
Into a kiss.)

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[622] Letter to Lamennais, 1 September 1823 – Bénichou, *Les mages romantiques*, 283; 'Fonction du poète' (1839) – Bénichou, *Les mages romantiques*, 309; 'La Poète' (1823) – Bénichou, *Sacre de l'écrivain*, 391; 'Discours de réception à l'Académie Française', 3 June 1841 – Bénichou, *Les mages romantiques*, 307.

[623] '…elle lui demande des croyances'; Hugo in *La Muse française*, August 1823 – quoted in Bénichou, *Sacre de l'écrivain*, 387.

[624] Zumthor, *Victor Hugo, poète de Satan*, 1-61.

[625] Victor Hugo, 'Océan', quoted from Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:378.

For his new mission, Hugo did not have to rely on his poetic ability alone. Although he had parted ways with Christianity, he had retained a strong interest in esotericism and other forms of alternative religiosity. When spiritism – group invocations of the spirits of the dead – became popular in the 1850s, the Hugo family was one of the first on the Continent to embrace this form of otherworldly communication. For some measure, Hugo's interest in spiritism will have been due to the personal tragedy that had befallen him. The tragic death of his beloved eldest daughter had intensified his yearning for an answer to life's great questions, especially those regarding the existence of suffering, death, and the afterlife. He became particularly convinced of the reliability of the turning tables when, during one of the sessions, he experienced the sensation that he had made contact with his drowned daughter. For almost two years, he and his family convened with the spirits at regular intervals, communicating with famous dead as Aeschylus, Moses, Galileo, Jesus, Rousseau, Aristotle, Voltaire, Cain, and the Wandering Jew (sic).[626]

The spirits greatly stimulated Hugo in his ambitious endeavour to rewrite the history of God and Satan. In October 1854, the 'spirit of death' urged the 'Ocean-Poet' (as the spirits liked to call him) to write an 'Advice to God', a myth so forceful in its exposition of universal redemption through love that it would be capable to impress the deity itself. Hugo interpreted this message as a reference to his newly started *Fin de Satan*.[627] This was also his conclusion when, on 8 March 1855, Jesus Christ began to speak in glowing terms about a 'new Gospel' that was coming soon and that would efface the old one, proclaiming the final salvation of mankind.[628] It was clear, thus, that Hugo was not to be a simple transmitter of messages from the beyond, but that it would be his own imaginative, creative undertaking that was to topple the balance and change heaven and earth. The spirits, when consulted, confirmed many of Hugo's insights and occasionally added new ones. 'Hell does not exist,' the netherworld unanimously reported.[629] On 8 December 1853, after he had been queried about the future fate of evildoers, Moses had already declared: 'All those criminals are slowly transfigured and become just ones… Their crimes flow away as avalanches into the abyss of divine mercy.'[630] Jesus Christ himself reproached Christianity for preaching hatred 'under the name of hell' on 11 February 1855, repeating his disapproval of the doctrine of the 'eternal flames' on 18 February. On 15 and 22 March of the same year, Jesus returned and gave a long description of Satan that prefigures many aspects of the fallen angel in *Fin de Satan*. 'He was the traveller of the twilight; he was the walker in the shadows; he was the explorer of the abyss… he was the great interrogator of God, the speaker of negations of truth, the questioner, the one that revolted, the combatant; he was the one wounded by the celestial barricade, the shining one and the bleeding one, the sublime bearer of the wounds of doubt and the scars of the idea… redoubtable and splendid griffon, he has Danton as wing and Robespierre as claw.'[631]

There can be no doubt, then, that Hugo's project was religious in nature; in fact, it seemed to have been intended more or less as the proclamation of a new religion. What exactly was this religion, and what role did Satan play in it? In complete form, *Fin de Satan* was to have furnished a complete cosmogony. The poem starts with a description of Satan's long fall through the heavens, descending deeper and deeper into the darkness till even the last star has become invisible. Here, already, Hugo begins to give new symbolic meaning to the old myth.

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[626] Bénichou, *Les mages romantiques*, 503-507.
[627] Zumthor, *Victor Hugo, poète de Satan*, 35, 48-50.
[628] Zumthor, *Victor Hugo, poète de Satan*, 50-51.
[629] Zumthor, *Victor Hugo, poète de Satan*, 52.
[630] Grillet, *Le Diable dans la littérature au XIXe Siècle*, 158-159.
[631] Zumthor, *Victor Hugo, poète de Satan*, 256.

His Satan, in complete contrast to Byron's Lucifer, is symbolic for matter viz. the material. Matter is the cause of evil because it exists separately from god and the love of god. The source of evil, of the eclipse of the deity, is thus the creation of the material universe; and the story of the fall can also be told as the withdrawal of the deity from the cosmos to make possible the existence of creation. Satan is the most absolute manifestation of this:

> God does except me. He ends with me. I am his outer limit.
> God would be infinite if I would not exist.[632]

At one point, Satan becomes aware of his solitude and of his love for the divine, but though he asks for mercy, he is unable to return to the deity. In heaven, however, the angel Liberty is born from a feather left behind by Satan and animated into a fierce maiden by the deity. Like De Vigny's Eloa, she descends to earth to save Satan. Her appearance dissolves the spectre of Isis-Lilith, the veil 'that men call Fate'. By her intermediary as daughter both of god and Satan, of spiritual love and extra-centrifugal matter, she brings about the reconciliation of the latter with the former. God 'wipes away the infamous night' and Satan is reborn as a sanctified Lucifer.

This cosmic devolution and evolution runs parallel with, or rather fulfils itself in the historical development of mankind. Thus Satan's first anguish of solitude and cry for mercy is coincidental with Jesus' suffering on the cross, which is a symbol for the suffering of humanity as a whole. Jesus, however, is not mankind's Saviour: that is the revolutionary spirit of Liberty, which for Hugo is incarnated in France:

> Ce peuple étrange est plus qu'un peuple, c'est une âme;
> Ce peuple est l'Homme même; il brave avec dédain
> L'enfer, et, dans la nuit, cherche à tâtons l'Eden;
> Ce peuple, c'est Adam; mais Adam qui se venge,
> Adam ayant volé le glaive ardent de l'ange,
> Et chassant devant lui la Nuit et le Trépas.[633]
>
> (This remarkable nation is more than a nation, it is a soul;
> This nation is Man itself; it braves hell with contempt,
> And searches on hands and feet for Eden in the night;
> This nation is Adam, but Adam with a vengeance,
> An Adam that has stolen the burning sword from the angel
> And chases before him both Night and Death.)

It is the French Revolution, according to Hugo, that establishes the victory of Liberty and allows man to be free, united in love. As the deity says to Satan at the end of the poem: 'Man, who was enchained by you, is liberated by her… Come: the dungeon's destruction abolishes hell!'[634] The new era of happiness and oneness with the divine that the events of 1789 had inaugurated was to be described by Hugo in another epic poem, provisionally entitled 'God'. It is small wonder, one cannot help to remark, that the Ocean-Poet only succeeded in finishing some scattered fragments of this work.

how Satanist were the Romantic Satanists?

After reviewing these new or restyled Satanic myths, it is time that we address a question that by now may be pressing: can we consider the Romantic Satanists 'genuine' Satanists? In other words: can we describe them as early adepts of *religious* Satanism, engaging in a

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[632] Hugo, *Fin de Satan*, 210 [lines 4884-4885] : 'Dieu m'excepte. Il finit à moi. Je suis sa borne./Dieu serait infini si je n'existais pas.'

[633] Hugo, *Fin de Satan*, 221 [lines 5180-5185]. In a guidebook, Hugo would describe Paris as 'the place of revolutionary revelation' and 'the Jerusalem of mankind' – Zumthor, *Victor Hugo, poète de Satan*, 157.

[634] Hugo, *Fin de Satan*, 240 [fragment].

religious veneration of Satan? This would make them the first known religious Satanists of the modern era: thus, the matter evidently merits closer scrutiny.

Before we can give a meaningful answer to this question, however, some clarifications regarding the terms we use are in place. With historians of literature, the terms 'Romantic Satanism' or 'Literary Satanists' sometimes designate a wide variety of authors, some of whom only used the devil as a traditional bogey man in spooky stories, while others merely show a marked predilection for 'things wicked' (as was the older signification of the word 'Satanism'; see the etymological discussion in the introduction).[635] For the purposes of my research, I have narrowed down this bewildering variety to those Romantic authors who, in some measure or another, display a positive identification with Satan in their works. Even narrowed down to this, Romantic Satanism cannot be described as a coherent movement with a single voice, but rather as a post factum identified group of sometimes widely divergent authors among whom a similar theme is found.[636] As such, however, the term is still useful, particularly for localizing and analyzing shifting attitudes to Satan, as is our present aim. In addition, we have seen how the authors we have thus set apart posses some clear common denominators that unmistakably inform their treatment of Satan: a 'revolutionary' or 'Radical' attitude in political and religious matters, for instance, and a new, Romantic approach towards the finding or creation of meaning.

But were the authors we have thus declared Romantic Satanists also *religious* Satanists? This simple question requires a complex answer. It should be remembered, first of all, that Romantic Satanism is a term of literary history, not of religious studies. Despite sometimes persistent rumours to the contrary, there are no indications that any of the Romantic Satanists ever held religious rites to worship Satan. It is true that Byron writes about holding nightly revels dressed in monk's garbs while drinking claret from a skull; and it might be equally true that we can find a faint reference here to the practices of Sir Francis Dashwood's so-called Hell-Fire Club.[637] But this does not amount to intentional, explicit veneration of the fallen angel, let alone the black Masses Byron was sometimes accused of – none of which are attested for in our sources or in Byron's many autobiographies. In the same vein, Victor Hugo's immersion in spiritism is not equal to Satanism. It is certainly true that he had in part been inspired by the 'turning tables' to compose his poem on Satan: but it had been predominantly the spirits of Jesus and Moses who had instructed him to do so.[638] Only once a spiritual entity that was identified as Satan made his appearance during the séances on Jersey. After more thorough deliberation, however, Hugo and his companions unmasked this visitor as something far worse, namely the spirit of Emperor Napoleon III (sic!).[639] Among the other major Romantic Satanists, the only instance in which we find anything resembling ritual religious practices is with Shelley, who wrote in one of his letters that he had ascended a mountain behind his Italian house '& suspended a garland & raised a small turf altar'.[640] Yet

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[635] Cf. for instance Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, 53-91. In the Gothic literature of the Romantic era, the devil is mostly used as traditional representative of evil and terror, although a deeper reading may sometimes reveal other subconscious messages. See on this the excellent article by Per Faxneld, 'Woman liberated by the Devil four Gothic novels: Willim Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya, or The Moor* (1806), and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820),' in *Grotesque Femininities: Evil, women and the Feminine*, ed. M. Barrett (Inter-Disciplinary Press: Oxford, 2010), 29-43.

[636] Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 6, already remarks that Romantic Satanism was not 'monolithic or univocal'.

[637] Byron to John Murray, 19 September 1820; Byron, *Selected Letters*, 234. The skull cup is also mentioned in a letter to Lady Melbourne from 17 October 1813; idem 76.

[638] Zumthor, *Victor Hugo, poète de Satan*, 1-62.

[639] Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:361.

[640] Shelley to Thomas Jefferson Hogg, 22 October 1821; Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Frederic L. Jones. 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 2:359-362 [Letter 667], there 2:361. Shelley's letter was a reaction to an epistle from Hogg dated 15 June, 1821 in which the latter speaks of 'propitiating' Pan with an inscription and a garland in Bisham Wood while taking a walk with Thomas Love

these 'rites of the true religion' had been intended for the worship of 'the mountain-walking Pan': and although this may have been a highly significant occurrence in itself, it hardly amounts to Satanism.

We can thus safely discard any intimations that the Romantic Satanists practised Satanism in the stereotypical way in which it was conceived by centuries of attribution that had preceded them, and which still is the most common association with the term today – i.e. by staging sinister rites for the veneration of the devil of preferably nocturnal and obscene nature. This however does by no means exhaust the possibilities of our inquiry. As I have already stated in the introduction and in the previous chapter, I do not think we need to limit the religious to ritual or collective actions only. If we apply our slightly adjusted version of Bellah's definition to Romantic Satanism – religion being a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man to what he thinks to be the ultimate conditions of his existence – it seems quite valid to consider the mythical poetic projects we studied in the preceding sections as *religious ventures*. It has become quite clear in the previous pages, I hope, that the Romantic Satanists strove to express conceptions about ultimate grounds of being and a general order of existence in their major 'Satanist' works. They were also, sometimes quite consciously, staking claims on what had formerly been considered the territory of the church. It is true that they may not always have termed their creative construction of myths and meaning as religious themselves – Byron and Shelley would certainly not have felt inclined to do so. But when we apply our own understanding of the term, there is ample reason to consider its application valid. In the mythic works we have analysed, Satan, or other mythological figures traditionally associated or identified with him, clearly serve as a dominant or at least important symbol to express man's relations to what are perceived to be his ultimate conditions of existence. It is inadequate to contest that these appearances of Satan were merely a matter of literature. Literature *was* a matter of religion for the Romantic Satanists, the place where they gave form to their deepest convictions. I think thus that we might be justified to describe these utterances as forms of bona fide religious Satanism.

Nevertheless I want to complicate this picture right away. Even though I hold the conclusions above to be valid, I still do not think we can speak of the Romantic Satanists as religious Satanists. Bellah had a reason to define religion as a '*set* of symbolic forms and acts' relating man to his presumed ultimate conditions of existence. This implies a certain consistency in practise or perception, a life stance that informs one's life in significant ways. Although such a consistent life stance might certainly have been present among the Romantic Satanists, it did not necessarily involve the figure of Satan. In their work, the metaphoric meaning of the Romantic Satan could and would sometimes be expressed by other mythological figures, such as the Wandering Jew, Prometheus, or Frankenstein's monster.[641] And when Satan makes his appearance, his presence in different works of the same author often has widely divergent and even contradictory significances.

When considered individually, even the icons of Romantic Satanism often turn out to be not *that* Satanist at all. This is very obvious with Byron, whose Lucifer is, as we have seen, open to different, less panegyric interpretations. Byron made it quite clear, moreover, that Satan, albeit symbolizing certain abstract human tendencies in *Cain*, was not his primary object of identification. Already in his earlier play *Manfred*, the eponymous protagonists proudly rejects all mediation by organised religion, but also refuses to bow before 'Arimanes' (who is

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Peacock (Shelley, *Letters*, 359-360n). I owe this reference to Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 25.

[641] Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* (1912; reprint, London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1927), particularly the scene on pp. 135-136, where Dr. Frankenstein's creature reads *Paradise Lost* and compares his own situation with that f Milton's Satan.

quite clearly an avatar of the Christian Satan *via* Goethe's *Faust*) or any of his mortal or spiritual servants ('my past power/ Was purchased by no compact with thy crew').[642] Cain likewise declines to bend his knee to the Creator or Lucifer.[643] Given the probability that we can consider both Manfred and Cain as alter egos of their author, as well as the fact that Byron wrote *Cain* in reaction to allegations about his preference for the 'worser half' of dualism, we can regard these passages as a clear rejection of the epithet of Satanist.

A similar conspicuous lack of consistent Satanism can be found with Victor Hugo. In *Fin de Satan*, the fallen angel was already an ambivalent symbol: in the rest of Hugo's work, he uses the devil as he pleases, as representative of evil or of man's better strivings.[644] Nor do we find an exclusive deployment of the Satan trope with Shelley. In *Queen Mab*, the legendary figure of the Wandering Jew has much the same role as the Romantic Satan. In his later magnus opus, *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley abandoned the fallen angel for the morally less ambiguous character of Prometheus, who he judged 'a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the hero of *Paradise Lost*, interfere with the interest'.[645]

Even greater ambiguity we find with Blake. *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* provides us with theological somersaults that even now may surprise because of their daring. Blake's subsequent work, however, at first sight seems to retract many of the work's paradoxical statements about the diabolic. A careful reader may have noted that *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* only speaks of devils and hell, never of Satan. In other poems and prophecies by Blake, Satan appears in his more or less traditional role of representative of evil and misfortune. Blake would not be Blake, however, if he would not radically redefine this evil. In *Milton*, for instance, Satan is first equated with 'Newton's Pantocrator, weaving the Woof of Locke'; the fact that he is also called 'Eternal Death' suggests that he might also be identified as the 'devourer' of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.[646] Reproached by more spiritual powers, *Milton* recounts, this Satan set himself up as deity, 'drawing out his infernal scroll/Of Moral laws and cruel punishments upon the clouds of Jehovah/To pervert the Divine voice in its entrance to the earth'. As a consequence, he grows 'Opake', blocking the infinite and the eternal from view by his opacity.[647]

The devil stands here for the same things that Milton's Jehovah symbolized in *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: first 'Newtonian' philosophy, and second the 'Mathematic Holiness' and 'Virtues & Cruel Goodnesses' of the institutional churches, whose adherents 'in his synagogues worship Satan under the Unutterable Name'.[648] In the last plates of the poem,

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[642] Quote from *Manfred: A Dramatic Poem*, Act III, scene iv, lines 374-375; cf. Act II, scene ii, 252-255; Act II, scene iv, 405-406; Act III, scene i, 52-56.

[643] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 176 [Act I, lines 310-317]. In the next line, Lucifer declares 'Ne'er the less/Thou art my worshipper; not worshipping/Him [the Creator] makes thee mine the same.' Does Byron make Lucifer here simply into the echo of Christian theology, as the subsequent allusions to the eternal punishment of hell suggests? Or is he making a deeper point, and is he referring to the irredeemable loss of naive faith that eating of the tree of knowledge occasions, or the irrevocable loss of primal unity that individual consciousness brings about?

[644] Grillet, *Le Diable dans la littérature*, 153: 'C'est ainsi que le progresse s'accomplit par Satan, contre Satan, pour Satan.' At other occasions, Hugo did adopt the archangel Michael, the traditional mythological antagonist of Satan, as heroic embodiment of Liberty, France, 'or quite simply the Spirit of Modernity' (idem, 156).

[645] Shelley, *Shelley's* Prometheus Unbound, 36-37 [Preface, lines 11-50]. In *The Devil's Walk*, a poem from 1812, Satan also appears as representative of evil, although this evil is, once again, described as oppression and the exploitation of the poor by the rich. Cf. Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 81-82.

[646] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 112 [*Milton*, plate 4].

[647] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 118 [*Milton*, plate 9]; compare also 122 [plate14], where Blake writes that this Opacity is one of the (self-set) limits of the infinite.

moreover, this Satan is identified as a spectre and equated with Negation, which is the 'Reasoning Power in Man'.[649] While Jehovah is still an ambiguous lower divinity in *Milton* (he is described as a leper at one time[650]), in *The Ghost of Abel*, the reversion (or re-reversion) seems complete, with Jehovah representing the Imagination/the Eternal/the supernatural, and Satan appearing as the Accuser demanding human blood. At the end of the short play, he is sent to eternal death by the deity, 'even till Satan Self-subdu'd/Put off Satan'.[651] It might have been this Satan that Blake reported to have met on the staircase of his house during the last years of his life, a creature with large eyes like burning coals and long teeth and claws that was described by him as 'the gothic fiend of our legends – the true devil'.[652]

The absence of a consistent and consequential employment of the Satan-symbol in and outside their work is the most important reason, in my opinion, that prevents us from categorizing the Romantic Satanists as religious Satanists. They were simply 'not all that'. Going back to our earlier point, I would rather say that some of the *works* of the Romantic Satanists present us with *moments* of religious Satanism. With still much ambivalence in Byron's *Cain* and Hugo's *Fin de Satan*, quite evidently in Shelley's *Laon and Cythna* and Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and to varying degrees in other Satanist works of these authors or of less well-known Romantic Satanists, Satan functions as a symbol expressing man's relations to the ultimate and as an object of identification, imitation, and veneration. Even though none of these authors, as far as our sources show, implemented these instants of religious creativity into a full-fledged Satanist religion, we can still say that these works confront us with a new, modern form of religious Satanism in embryo. In that sense, and in that sense only, Romantic Satanism can indeed be called a religious Satanism.
As with early modern Satanism featured in the preceding chapter, we might describe the emergence of this embryonic Satanism as a process of identification. Yet this was not so much identification with the old medieval and early modern stereotype of the Satanist. In a later section, we will signal some Romantic utterances that indicate a faint tendency in this direction, but none of these were of decisive significance for the emergence of Romantic Satanism. Of more importance were the assertions of diabolic allegiance that were sometimes directed against the Romantic Satanists themselves by their contemporaries. In this respect, we can think of the attribution of Satanism to some of the Romantic Satanists by conservative critics (amply documented by Schock). This may have prompted some to a kind of parodying identification – Byron is a case in point. In fact, as we have seen, the creation of our hermeneutic category of Romantic Satanism originates with these allegations by conservative critics. But we can also take into account the much broader demonization of the partisans of radical, revolutionary change and the values of the Western Revolution that occurred in the wake of the French Revolution and would continue throughout the nineteenth century. The deflection or reflection of this attribution was certainly an important creative spark for the conflagration of Romantic Satanism, working in tandem, and in mutual

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[648] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 149 [*Milton*, plate 35]; 123 [plate 14]; 120 [plate 12]. Compare 118 [plate 9], where Blake describes how Satan creates the seven deadly sins, 'drawing out his infernal scroll/of Moral laws and cruel punishments upon the clouds of Jehovah,/To pervert the Divine voice in its entrance to the earth/With thunder of war & trumpet's sound' and 156-157 [plate 43-44], where Milton derides 'Satan's holiness', with Satan responding: 'But I alone am God, & I alone in Heav'n & Earth,/Of all that live and dare utter this, others tremble & bow,/'Till All Things become One Great Satan, in Holiness/Oppos'd to Mercy […].'
[649] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 159 [*Milton*, plate 46]. Lucifer is depicted with more sympathy in *Milton*, as a 'Combination of Individuals' forced by Satan to appear in human form but nevertheless 'combined in Freedom & holy Brotherhood'; ibidem 148-14 [plate 35].
[650] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 122 [*Milton*, plate 14].
[651] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 315.
[652] Ackroyd, *Blake*, 332

enhancement, with an autonomous discovery of Satan as an adequate and provocative symbol to express discontent with the old conceptions regarding the social and cosmic order. The oppressive presence in past and present of dominant forms of Christianity was a further motivating factor in this.

In brief: if we can speak of identification here, it is not so much with an earlier stereotype of the Satanist, but rather with the symbolic character of Satan himself. Despite the difference in voices that we encounter in the major texts of Romantic Satanism, this is a clear common denominator. This fact may not be an insignificant coincidence. I would rather postulate that it marks an essential point in which Romantic Satanism departs from the marginal Satanism of earlier centuries and becomes a manifestation as well as starting point of something fundamentally new and different. Charles Taylor designated the life stance that came to characterize post-Christian world views in the West as 'exclusive humanism' – a life stance in which humanity forms the ultimate horizon and anchor point for understanding the universe – while Northrop Frye described the Romantic myth as 'the form in which the Romantic poet expresses the recovery, for man, of what he formerly ascribed to gods, heroes, or the forces of nature'.[653] These broader historical characterizations do fit well with the Romantic myths we have examined, and also with the role they ascribe to Satan. In essence, the fallen angel almost always serves as an expression for the human; in humanity as a whole, the portion of humanity that strives for emancipation, or a certain faculty that is common to all human beings. Thus Blake, in *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, uses the diabolic as an expression for Desire, Poetic Genius, and the Imagination, all essentially features that 'reside in the human breast'.[654] Shelley, in the tradition of Godwin, makes Satan a symbol for the struggle of humanity to free itself from political and ideological oppression. With Byron, Lucifer becomes the manifestation of the human drive for knowledge, but also for the human tendency to the ideal and transcendent which we might designate with the term imagination as well, at least in the sense that the Romantics used this word. Hugo's Satan, in conclusion, is a microcosm of humanity again, showing the (projected) history of humankind from the darkness of material oppression towards the realm of freedom and love.

This does not mean that the myths and world views of the Romantic Satanists were always limited to the purely human. Blake's Imagination obtains genuinely cosmic dimensions, with every object in the natural world containing its own 'Genius'. Yet, as he explained quite clearly in a text from 1809: 'These Gods are visions of eternal attributes, or divine names, which, when erected into gods, become destructive to humanity. They ought to be servants, and not the masters of man, or of society.'[655] Much the same might be said about Shelley's Serpent-Spirit in *Laon and Cythna* and Hugo's Satan in *Fin de Satan*. The cosmic drama they describe fundamentally unfolds itself in human history or in the human psyche. 'God only acts and is in existing beings or men,' Blake already remarked in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.[656] Hence he could conclude that worshipping the divine meant 'honouring His gifts in other men each according to their Genius'. Or, as he more succinctly phrased it in a later work: 'Thou art a Man: God is no more: Thy own Humanity learn to adore'.[657] We can say with confidence that Blake was speaking here for the other Romantic Satanists as well.

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[653] Taylor, *Age of Secularisation*, 17; Frye, *A Study of English Romanticism*, 125-126. Cf. also McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe*, 281, on the nineteenth-century emergence of 'Religions of Humanity'.

[654] See also *Milton*, plate 2 (*Poems and Prophecies*, 110), where Blake tells how 'The Eternal Great Humanity Divine' planted its paradise in the 'Portals of my Brain' by the ministry of the Muses.

[655] Blake in 'A Descriptive Catalogue' (1809), quoted in Schock, *Romantic Satanism*, 63-64.

[656] Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 28.

[657] Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 39; *Poems and Prophecies*, 350 [from *The Everlasting Gospel*, written circa 1818]. A friend quoted Blake thus: 'Christ he said – he is the Only God – But then he added – And so am I and so are you.' Ackroyd, *Blake*, 325.

sex, science, and liberty

Although the Romantic Satanists may not have been Satanists in the religious sense, this does not diminish the significance of their reinvention of Satan for the history of modern religious Satanism. Whatever their personal convictions or intentions, the later perception and reception of their work would be decisive, I would like to argue, for the emergence of new attitudes towards Satan in (certain sections of) Western culture. We can now determine the character of this influence with more precision. I think there are three crucial ways in which Romantic Satanism contributed to the later rise of modern religious Satanism.

1º. They mark the first historical appearance in Western civilisation of an influential cultural current that positively revaluated Satan. Their radical reappraisals of the fallen angel remained available as a potential source of inspiration in later times – Byron's and Shelley's writings were widely accessible from early on, Hugo's *Fin de Satan* and Blake's works would be rediscovered in the final decades of the nineteenth century – but also would send ripples of influences through western culture that would be transmitted into the twentieth century.

2º. They show a new, post-Christian and post-Enlightenment way of dealing with myth and meaning, rooted in a revolutionary rethinking of human creativity and human imagination as a source for the religious truth. Without taking into account this fundamental shift in attitude, I think, much of modern religious Satanism remains incomprehensible; for instance some of its approaches towards the figure of Satan, which in large measure were prefigured by the Romantic Satanists.

3º. Romantic Satanism would prove a decisive influence in determining the shape of the rehabilitated Satan that would continue to haunt nineteenth-century counterculture and eventually emerge in modern religious Satanism. By re-evaluating certain traditional features of the Christian Satan, they brought together a number of elements that would be passed on into later thinking about the devil.

The three most important elements that would be combined in the new nineteenth-century Satan could be summarized as *sex*, *science*, and *liberty*.[658] By now, it would be tedious to mention once more the importance of the association with *liberty* that Romantic Satanism had connected to Satan. We can see this element return in all Romantic Satanists. In traditional Christian mythology, Satan's fall had been associated with proud, unlawful insurrection against divine authority. Giving new meaning to this old theme, the Romantic Satanists transformed the fallen angel into a noble champion of political and individual freedom against arbitrary power. From a political perspective, the nineteenth-century poets singing paeans to Satan were mostly 'Leftist' or 'Radical' orientated, usually combining a progressive belief in social and political reform with strongly anti-Christian or anti-clerical attitudes. The devil, in the most important of their new myths, became strongly associated with the emancipating and liberating tendencies of the Western Revolution.

A second, and perhaps more surprising feature connected with Satan that appears with Romantic Satanism was his association with *science*. 'Science' in this context could take on a variety of meanings, including scientific and technical progress, 'modern' critical thought, or 'Reason', but also the secret, esoteric knowledge of magic, or combinations of some of these elements. Ever since Satan's identification with the Serpent of Genesis, the lure of forbidden knowledge had been one of his classical attributes in Christian cosmology. In a nineteenth

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[658] The idea of the threefold emphasis in the Romantic Satan I proposed earlier in my article 'Sex, Science & Liberty: The Resurrection of Satan in 19th Century (Counter) Culture'. The nineteenth-century author Jules Bois, when he analyses his century's obsession with the fallen angel in *Le Satanisme et la Magie* (1895), also distinguishes these three Satans: Satan 'le plus désolé des Anarchistes', Satan as 'intelligence lucide', and Satan-Pan; see his *Le Satanisme et la Magie: Avec une étude de J.K. Huysmans*. Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1895), 27-35. On Jules Bois, see Chapter III.

century that would see the birth of a scientism with sometimes plainly religious overtones, the search for knowledge could barely be considered evil any longer. Thus Satan, in his aspect of Lucifer the light-bringer, became a paragon of those promoting the pursuit of scientific enquiry and critical thinking regardless of the boundaries set by faith or tradition. 'Science, and her sister Poesy,/Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free!' – that is how Shelley described the coming reign of the Serpent/Lucifer/Liberty in *Laon and Cythna*.[659] Byron's *Cain*, however, is the most eloquent testimony of this tendency. 'Knowledge is good, And life is good, and how can both be evil?' wonders Cain; and it is Lucifer who discloses to him the knowledge of the stars and of other worlds past and present.[660] (That Byron, on closer reading, was not all that lyrical about Lucifer's spirit of inquiry was something that tended to be forgotten in the reception of his play.)[661]

Finally, a third complex of meaning linked Satan with earth, nature, and 'the flesh', particularly in its manifestations of passionate love and *sex*. Already from the time of the apocryphal story of the Watcher Angels, the fallen angels had been brought into connection with lust, temptation and the 'works of the flesh'. This 'pornification' of Satan found ample continuation in later Christian lore and probably reached its apogee in the demonological fantasies of the Early Modern Era.[662] In this respect as well, Romantic Satanism implemented a reversal of appraisal. The Romantics accorded an almost divine status to passionate love which transcended human and godly laws; the Romantic Satanists, moreover, mostly supported notions about free love and female liberation of one kind of another. If all this was the territory of Satan, the dark angel might be preferable to the stern, lawgiving god of Christianity.

This reversal of sympathy is almost ubiquitous in Romantic Satanists; it can be detected in Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in the work of Shelley, in the beautiful lines from Alfred de Vigny's *Eloa* that we already quoted, in Byron's *Heaven and Hell* and with a host of other authors. We should be careful, however, of rashly projecting contemporary attitudes towards 'carnality' upon early nineteenth-century authors like the Romantic Satanists. A strong trait of Neo-Platonism permeated Romanticism. While 'Sin' is considered by Blake as an invention of 'Mathematical Morality', his attitude towards nature and the body is ambivalent: on the one hand, it is the way in which the Eternal Imagination expresses itself; on the other hand, it is a mere trapping or even impediment of the true reality of imaginary Forms. Hugo's *Fin de Satan* can be read as an account of the man's fall into materiality and his subsequent return to the spiritual essence of love from which he emanated. Byron's Lucifer even expresses open disdain for the corporal in *Cain* and suggests that it is only man's spirit and his faculty to conceive the ideal that makes him stand out among his fellow-animals.[663] It is only among later authors that the ambivalence we can detect here shifts into a full-blown rehabilitation of the body.

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[659] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 181 [*Laon and Cythna*, Canto 5,51].

[660] Byron and Steffan, *Cain*, 162 [Act I, lines 37-38].

[661] Blake, of course, is quite another story in this respect: when he identifies Satan with Science, both terms are usually unambiguously negative. This negative attitude towards science, however, only applies to its current, perverted form: in its original state, it was an intrinsic part of human nature. See for instance *Jerusalem*, 'To the Public' (*Poems and Prophecies*, 163): 'The Primeval State of Man was Wisdom, Art and Science,' and also *Milton*, plate 29 (ibidem, 141): 'But in eternity the Four Arts, Poetry, Painting, Music/And Architecture, which is Science, are the Four Faces of Man.'

[662] For this aspect in particular, see Günther Jerouschek, '"Diabolus habitat in eis" Wo der Teufel zu Hause ist: Geslechtigkeit in rechtstheologischen Diskurs des ausgehenden Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit,' *Rechtshistorischer Journal* 9 (1990): 301-329.

[663] Likewise, while Goethe made Satan the representative of nature and sexuality in a repressed scene for *Faust* (1808-1832), this also marks him as ambivalent: it is the human striving for the ideal, Goethe tells us in his play, that is to be considered the better part of our nature (see Albrecht Schöne, *Götterzeichen, Liebeszauber, Satanskult: Neue Einblicke in alte Goethetexte* (München: C.H. Beck, 1982), 107-230, for Goethe's repressed

Despite these ambiguities, we can see clear preludes to a more profound identification of Satan with nature in some of the authors we discussed. De Vigny's Satan, for instance, presents himself as the voice of the natural world in *Eloa*:

> Nature, listening to the laws of my reign,
> Receives me lovingly, hears me, makes me her breath;
> I become its soul again, and for my sweet designs
> Evoke my subjects from deep within the elements.
>
> (La Nature, attentive aux lois de mon empire,
> M'accueille avec amour, m'écoute et me respire;
> Je redeviens son âme, et pour mes doux projets
> Du fond des éléments j'évoque mes sujets.)[664]

A few years earlier, Shelley had expressed himself in much the same way about the presence of the Serpent-Spirit in *Laon and Cythna*:

> the tempest-shaken wood,
> The waves, the fountains, and the hush of night –
> These were his voice, and well I understood
> His smile divine, when the calm sea was bright
> With silent stars, and Heaven was breathless with delight.[665]

The Satanic connection with sex and carnality gained further complexity because of Satan's historic association with the pagan gods and spirits of the natural world. This theme was already prefigured by Shelley in *On the Devil, and Devils* (ca. 1820), a witty essay enclosed in one of his notebooks that would only be published decades after his death. Commenting upon the devil's historic link with the 'Antient Gods of the Woods [sic]', the English poet went on to suggest a stark contrast between the guiltless mirth of the pagans and Christian hypocrisy:

> The Sylvans & Fauns with their leaders the Great Pan were most poetical personages, & were connected in the imagination of the Pagans with all that could enliven & delight. They were supposed to be innocent beings not greatly different in habits & manners from the shepherds & herdsmen of which they were the patron saints. But the Xtians contrived to turn the wrecks of the Greek mythology as well as the little they understood of their philosophy to purposes of deformity & falsehood.[666]

The threefold association of the dark angel with sex, science and liberty, already hesitantly present among the Romantic Satanists, would increasingly manifest itself with other authors in the century that followed. One only has to read Gisouè Carduddi's *Inno a Satana* (1863) – on which later more – or Anatole France's delightful *La révolte des Anges* (1914).[667] Potentially, Satan could thus become a universal earth god that functioned as a positive mirror image of the negatively perceived god of Christian tradition. We may go further and state that the Romantic Satanists, although they never established a dorm of religious Satanism themselves, already provide all the necessary preliminaries for such a religious Satanism to arise. For the first time, Satan was seen not as the embodiment of evil, but as a positive force

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Brocken Mountain scene).

[664] De Vigny, *Œuvres Complètes*, 1:74.

[665] Shelley, *Complete Poetical Works*, 2:125 [*Laon and Cythna*, Canto 1,45].

[666] Shelley, *Shelley's 'Devils' Notebook*, 97-99.

[667] Anatole France, *La révolte des Anges: Préface de Pierre Boulle* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1980). This book about a new insurrection by some of the 'good' angels reads like a half-ironic commentary on Romantic Satanism, ending with Satan's refusal to lead the conquest of heaven because it would only transform him inot a new tyrant-god: 'Dieu vaincu deviendra Satan,' he explains, 'Satan vaincu deviendra Dieu' (p. 162). Also prominently present is the Romantic association of Satan with science (cf. 141), with nature (cf. 110-111), and with classic paganism: 'le sainte antiquité, le temps où les dieux étaient bons' and Satan roamed the earth as Dionysus (cf. 49, 135-169).

heralding the liberation of body and mind. After this fundamental reversion was made, the only thing needed, one could say, was somebody to give this idea religious bedding.
In the next sections, we will follow the legacy of the Romantic Satanists throughout nineteenth-century (counter) culture. Three cultural domains present themselves as particularly interesting for further examination: political ideology, history (i.e. historical reflections on earlier 'Satanisms'), and occultism and other forms of alternative religiosity. These fields of investigation not only present themselves when we browse through existing scholarly literature, they also flow more or less logically from the questions and answers that we have formulated above. Earlier, we presented the Christian invention of the Satanist stereotype as the origin of the concept of Satanism. It might consequently be of interest to see how the Romantic identification with Satan influenced their ideas about earlier 'Satanists'. The paramount importance of the political context for the emergence of Romantic Satanism more than justifies a further exploration of this field. And last but not least we are still on the lookout for possible cases of religious Satanism: and the only place we are likely to find these, is the twilight zone of alternative religiosity.[668]

Satan the anarchist

Politics, as we have seen, had been the matrix of the nineteenth-century resurrection of Satan, and his symbolic role as representative of values of the Western Revolution like liberation and emancipation had been essential in this process. Nowhere is this connection between Satan and revolution more eloquently illustrated than on the Place de la Bastille in Paris, where the French revolutionary élan is honoured by an immense brass column that was erected after the July Revolution of 1830. It is topped by a four meter high gilded statue by Auguste Dumont that is officially called the 'Génie de la Liberté'. For anyone familiar with the nineteenth-century iconography of Satan, however, it is obvious that this figure of a winged nude youth with a star shining above his forehead and a flaming torch in his hand is yet another avatar of Lucifer, the angel of light and liberty.[669]

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[668] Categorizing references or longer analyses of key figures in these three domains appear in Russell, *Mephistopheles*, 201 (Lévi), 204 (Proudhon), 219 (Blavatsky); Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:249-258 (Constant/Lévi), 2:260-262 (Proudhon); Dvorak, *Satanismus*, 321 (Proudhon and Bakunin); Frick, *Satan und die Satanisten*, 2:151-155 (Lévi); Schmidt, *Satanismus*, 92-96 (Lévi), 120-124 (theosophy and athroposophy). Russell, Milner, and Schmidt explicitly or implicitly place these personages in the framework of Romantic Satanism, as will be my main thesis in the subsequent sections; Schmidt, moreover, categorizes Lévi, Blavatsky, and Steiner as proponents of an 'integrativen Satanismus'. These references remain sketchy, however, and mostly do not supersede the level of description or simple allusion.

[669] In the 1794 Gothic novel *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis, Lucifer in his appearance as angel of light is already described thus: 'It was a Youth seemingly scarce eighteen, the perfection of whose form and face was unrivalled. He was perfectly naked: A bright Star sparkled upon his forehead; Two crimson wings extended themselves from his shoulders; and his silken locks were confined by a band of many-coloured fires, which played round his head, formed themselves into a variety of figures, and shone with a brilliance far surpassing that of precious Stones.' See Matthew Gregory Lewis, *The Monk: A Romance* (London: Brentano's, 1924), 2:184 [Volume II, chapter 4]. Maurice Agulhon notes the unusualness of this masculine genius: 'Paris: A Traversal from East to West,' in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. Volume III: Symbols*, ed. Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 523-553, there 692n. In his standard work on the French republican imagery, *Marrianne au combat: L'imagerie et la symbolique républicaines de 1789 à 1880* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), 62, he writes that the statue in its features and postures evokes 'plutôt un Mercure', which evidently misses the point.
An interesting article could be written about the traces of the Romantic Satan that remain in statues sprinkled across the European continent, and sometimes beyond. Prominent examples include Constantino Corti's *Lucifero* (1867), present whereabouts unknown, and the *Monumento al Traforo del Frejus* (1879) by Marcello Panissera di Veglio, at the Piazza Statuto in Turin. Another interesting example is Guillaume Geefs' *Génie du Mal* (1848) at the back of the pulpit in the Cathedral of Liège, perfectly Catholic except for the telltale tear of repentance it displays; it replaced the *Ange du Mal* (1842, now in the Bruxelles Musée des Beaux Arts) by Guillaume's brother Jozef Geefs, which was said to be too distractive to the female faithful because of its unsettling beauty

Given this wide-spread celebration of the devil as arch-revolutionary, we should not be unduly surprised to encounter the Romantic Satan among real-life revolutionaries as well. The most vivid echoes of the Romantic fascination with Satan, we have to direct our attention to anarchism, that most radical and most individualistic of leftist political philosophies.[670] One of the most interesting personalities in this regard is Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), the godfather of French anarchism. Proudhon is impossible to describe in a few phrases and seems to have embodied in his person most of the contradictions of his century. From humble rural background, his family had been so poor that he had been sent to school on wooden shoes, much to his schoolboy embarrassment. Nevertheless, the combination of unsophisticated piety and resolute republicanism his mother had displayed would always remain an ideal shimmering before Proudhon's eyes. During his youth, he had even planned to become a Catholic apologist, and he had spent his days as a printing apprentice preparing a lavish in-quarto Bible, furnished with extensive annotations that he compiled himself.

All this radically changed after his conversion to the cause of anarchism. In 1832, when the Restoration fervour had ushered into the July Revolution, he wrote in his private notebook:

CLERICAL INFLUENCE
Incompatible with { Human Dignity / Civil Liberty / Economy
Delenda Carthago.[671]

This concise remark already set the theme that Proudhon would pursue for the rest of his revolutionary career. In 1846, he received a ten years prison sentence for the publication of his *Système des contradictions économiques, ou philosophie de la misère*, a work purportedly on economics but doubling up in rather awkward fashion as a treatise on the existence of the divinity. Here we can encounter much of the familiar music we already heard with Romantic Satanists like Shelley and Hugo. 'Et moi je dis,' writes Proudhon for instance, 'Le premier devoir de l'homme intelligent et libre est de chasser incessament l'idée de Dieu de son esprit et de sa conscience. Car Dieu, s'il existe, est essentiellement hostile à notre nature, et nous ne relevons aucunement de son autorité. Nous arrivons à la science malgré lui, au bien-être malgré lui, à la société malgré lui; chacun de nos progrés est une victoire dans laquelle nous

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(cf. Jacques van Lennep, *De 19e-eeuwse Belgische beeldhouwkunst* (Brussel: General Bank, 1990), 57-58, 421-422). Clearly inspired by the Romantic Satan, although not unorthodox per se, is Ricardo Bellver's *El Angel Caído* (1877), now in the Parque del Buen Retiro, Madrid (cf. Muchembled, *History of the Devil*, 200). A statue of Eloa carried away by Satan from the hand of Joseph-Michel Pollet can (or could) be found in Oued Zenati in Algeria; a bronze version of the same statue dating from 1862 is kept in the collection of the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rouen.

[670] Karl Marx, the most famous and most influential of revolutionary thinkers, has been depicted as a secret worshipper of the devil by Richard Wurmbrand, in a somewhat obscure publication entitled *Was Karl Marx a Satanist?* (s.l., Diane Books 1979). Wurmbrand was a protestant minister who had fled communist persecution in his native Rumania; his book, which appeared under different titles in a number of editions and translations, found a ready reception among Christian audiences in Cold War America, just a few years before President Ronald Reagan would declare the Soviet Union 'Empire of Evil'. While it is true, however, that Marx wrote some antitheist Promethean poetry in his Romantic days of youth, and while it might also be true that he liked to sign letters with 'Old Nick' (English slang for the devil) and told his children stories about a diabolical toyshop owner, this hardly accounts to proof for practising Satanism. (Cf. A. N. Wilson, *God's Funeral: The Decline of Faith in Western Civilization* (London: John Murray, 1999), 90.)

[671] Pierre Haubtmann, *P.-J. Proudhon, genèse d'un antithéiste* ([Tours]: Mame, 1969), 118:
'INFLUENCE CLERICAL
Incompatible avec { Dignité humaine / Liberté civile / Économie
Delenda Carthago.'
I owe most of the autobiographical details about Proudhon to Haubtmann's book.

écrasons la Divinité.'[672] This diatribe against the 'esprit menteur' and 'tyran de Promethée' is continued with one of the outbursts that would gain Proudhon renown, his famous declaration that God is Evil: 'Les fautes dont nous te demandons la remise, c'est toi qui nous les fais commettre; les pièges dont nous te conjurons de nous délivrer, c'est toi qui les as tendus; et le satan qui nous assiége, ce satan, c'est toi. […] Dieu, c'est hypocrisie et mensonge; Dieu, c'est tyrannie et misère; Dieu, c'est le mal. […] Dieu, retire-toi! car dès aujourd'hui, guéri de ta crainte et devenu sage, je jure, la main étendue vers le ciel, que tu n'es que le bourreau de ma raison, le spectre de ma conscience.'[673]

With the old god declared tyrant, Satan cannot be far away. The dark angel would make a spectacular appearance on the pages of Proudhon's chef d'œuvre, *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église*, published in 1858. In this behemoth-like work, dedicated to Monsignor Mathieu, the bishop of Besancon, Proudhon addresses virtually every social and political question of his days, interspersing his political theorizing with nostalgic reminiscences about his boyhood years. The book centers, however, around the topic that was most dear to his heart: the 'clerical question', and matters concerning religion and church in general. Proudhon highlights the betrayal of the Revolution by the Church, as well as the destruction (in words that have a remarkable modern feel about them) of the healthy relationship man originally was supposed to have had with his environment – 'le sirocco chrétien, en passant sur nos âmes, les a desséchées.'[674] Above all, however, it is the curbing of liberty brought about by historical Christianity that incenses the anarchist Proudhon. 'Oh! je comprends, Monseigneur,' he exclaims at the end of the second volume (addressing once again the bishop of Besançon), 'que vous ne l'aimiez pas, la liberté, que vous ne l'ayez jamais aimée.'

> La liberté, que vous ne pouvez nier sans vous détruire, que vous ne pouvez affirmer sans vous détruire encore, vous la redoutez comme le Sphinx redoutait Œdipe: elle venue, l'Église est devinée; le christianisme n'est plus qu'un épisode dans la mythologie du genre humain. La liberté, symbolisée dans l'histoire de la Tentation, est votre anti-christ; la liberté, pour vous, c'est le diable.
>
> Viens, Satan, viens, la calomnié des prêtres et des rois, que je t'embrasse, que je te serre sur ma poitrine! Il y a longtemps que je te connais, et tu me connais aussi. Tes œuvres, ô le béni de mon cœur, ne sont pas toujours belles ni bonnes; mais elles seules donnent un sens à l'univers et l'empêchent d'être absurde. Que serait, sans toi, la Justice? un instinct; la raison? une routine; l'homme? une bête. Toi seul animes et fécondes le travail; tu ennoblis la richesse, tu sers d'excuse à l'autorité, tu mets le sceau à la vertu. Espère encore, proscrit ! Je n'ai à ton service qu'une plume ; mais elle vaut des millions de bulletins.[675]

While Proudhon had already exorcised the old Christian god as the satan (with small *s*) in *Philosophie de la misère*, here the reversal is completed, and Satan (with capital *S*) becomes the ultimate sense of the human existence.

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[672] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Système des contradictions économiques, ou philosophie de la misère*. 2 vols. (Paris: Guillaumin et Cie, 1846), 1:414. See also 1:416: 'Tant que l'humanité s'inclinera devant un autel, l'humanité, esclave des rois et des prêtres, sera réprouvée; tant qu'un homme, au nom de Dieu, recevra le serment d'un autre homme, la société sera fondée sur le parjure, e paix et l'amour seront bannis d'entre les mortels.' On p. 2:529, Proudhon likewise declares that true human virtue, 'celle qui nous rend dignes de la vie éternelle', consists of combating the idea of the deity with all means possible

[673] Proudhon, *Philosophie de la misère* , 1:416; see also 1:425ff.

[674] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église: Études de philosophie pratique*. 3 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1858), 2:84.

[675] Proudhon, *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église*, 2:540. In 1851, Proudhon had written in a similar vein in *Idée génerale de la Révolution au dix-neuvième siècle*, p. 290: 'A moi, Lucifer, Satan, qui que tu sois! Démon que la foi de mes pères oppose à Dieu et à l'Eglise! Je porterai ta parole et je te demande rien.' (Quoted in Milner, *Le diable dans la literature française*, 2:260)

It is probably hardly necessary to point out, as many critics have already done, that Proudhon's exclamation is not to be interpreted as a creedal statement of religious Satanism.[676] By now, it might be clear that the French anarchist was much given to grand outcries and less to sober philosophy: one of the things that attracted the scorn of Marx, who with his typical wry humour reacted on *The Philosophy of Misery* with a publication entitled *The Misery of Philosophy*.[677] Proudhon's Satan is nothing more or less than Liberty, as the context oof the text makes abundantly clear. Earlier, at the end of the first volume of *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église*, he had addressed Death in a similar vein, and in much the same way at the end of the third volume, Proudhon grandoloquently offers to receive the Roman-Catholic sacraments from Mgr. Mathieu himself – provided the Church adopts revolutionary principles first.

This is not to say, however, that Proudhon's work is devoid of religiosity, even when it is of a reliogisity of its own peculiar kind. 'Proudhon n'est pas un athée, c'est un ennemi de Dieu,' the bishop of Besancon is said to have remarked when he was confronted with the fierce book that was dedicated to him.[678] This comment seems remarkably apt to me. When one reads his writings, it is obvious that Proudhon never ceased to struggle with his own religious inclinations. The anguish that can be experienced when saying goodbye to faith is well expressed in a passage from a booklet he wrote on Jesus, where he elaborates upon his axiom 'God is Evil': 'À cette proscription décisive, qui sauve sa dignité, l'homme perd quelque chose, c'est incontestable; il perd immensément; il perd ses espérances immortelles; il perd ce rapport avec l'infini qui donne une satisfaction si ample à son orgueil et à son sens intime; il sacrifice sa propre éternité, afin d'être, pendant un instant, quelque chose, et de pouvoir s'affirmer lui-même…'[679] Satan was just a somewhat insignificant way station in this life-long confrontation with religion. In *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église*, Proudhon attempted to resolve his inner conflicts with a highly original proposal: the deification of the principle of Justice. This was not altogether devoid of its own logic. Philosophers and poets had been placing the deity in the dock for more than a century now; it was almost logical to take the next step and recognize that the one thing that superseded the deity was thus the idea of justice itself.[680] Although it may be doubted whether this newly-deified Justice was ever more than a paper god to Proudhon, it may be recounted here as a fitting illustration of the spirit of the times that in the eyes of the French anarchist, the French Revolution had been the most perfect manifestation of this deity, while in another passage, he proceeded to identify this divine justice with 'Humanity', that other god of nineteenth-century thinking.[681]

Proudhon probably was not altogether oblivious to these sub-surface currents in his own thinking – towards the end of *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église*, he described

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[676] Milner, *Le diable dans la literature française* , 2:262; Russell, *Mephistopheles*, 204.

[677] Giving quite unsuspectingly more ammunition to the Rev. Richard Wurmbrand in the process, who notes in his book that such reversals are 'one of the peculiarities of black magic'. Wurmbrand, *Was Marx a Satanist?*, 21.

[678] Quoted in Haubtmann, *P.-J. Proudhon*, 217n.

[679] Quoted in Haubtmann, *P.-J. Proudhon*, 226-227.

[680] 'La théologie a beau vouloir renverser cet ordre,' writes Proudhon in the second edition of *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église*, 'donner à Dieu le souveraineté et lui subordonner la Justice: le sens intime proteste, et, dans l'enseignement populaire, dans la prière, c'est la Justice qui sert de témoin à la Divinité et gage à la religion. La Justice est le Dieu suprême, elle est le Dieu vivant, le Dieu tout-puissant, le seul Dieu qui ose se montrer intolérant vis-à-vis de ceux qui le blasphèment, au-dessous duquel il n'y a que des idéalités pures et des hypothèses.' Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église. Études de philosophie pratique*, 2 vols. (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1988), 1:53.

[681] Proudhon, *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église* [1858 edition], 1:85: 'La Justice a son siège dans l'humanité, elle est progressive et indéfectible dans l'humanité, parce qu'elle est de l'humanité: telle est ma pensée, puisée elle-même au plus profond de la conscience.'

himself as 'every bit as religious' as the Roman-Catholic bishop he addresses. [682] Such sentiments would have been far removed from the mind of Michael Bakunin (1814-1876), the exiled Russian nobleman who would manage to turn up on almost every barricade of revolutionary Europe in the nineteenth century. Insurgent by profession, anarchist by vocation, Bakunin was a convinced materialist, allowing no room for the existence of a deity.[683] 'God being master, man is the slave,' he summarized his anarchist stance in two crisp sentences, 'If God is, man is a slave; now, man can and must be free; then, God does not exist.'[684] Bakunin nevertheless could also not resist the temptation of the Romantic Satan. In *God and the State*, a fragment he wrote on the eve of the Paris Commune of 1871, Bakunin retells the story of Genesis from an anarchist point of view:

> Jehovah, who of all the good gods adored by men was certainly the most jealous, the most vain, the most ferocious, the most unjust, the most bloodthirsty, the most despotic, and the most hostile to human dignity and liberty […] expressly forbade them from touching the tree of knowledge. He wished, therefore, that man, destitute of all understanding of himself, should remain an eternal beast, ever on all-fours before the eternal God, his creator and his master. But here steps in Satan, the eternal rebel, the first freethinker and the emancipator of worlds. He makes man ashamed of his bestial ignorance and obedience; he emancipates him, stamps upon his brow the seal of liberty and humanity, in urging him to disobey and eat of the fruit of knowledge.[685]

Of course, Bakunin was quick to point out the 'fabulous portion of this myth' and move on to its essence: the emancipation of Man, who 'has begun his distinctively human history and development by an act of disobedience and science – that is, by *rebellion* and by *thought*.' It is this, '*the power to think* and *the desire to rebel*', what makes humans human.[686] Or, as Bakunin put it: 'Man, a wild beast, cousin of the gorilla, […] has gone out from animal slavery, and passing through divine slavery, a temporary condition between his animality and his humanity, he is now marching on to the conquest and realization of human liberty.'[687] Here again, Satan functions as the guardian angel of liberty and the symbolic incorporation of a humanity struggling to be free.

It is almost impossible to trace the exact lines of influence by which the Satanic theme reached these anarchist thinkers. Theoretically, Proudhon could have picked up his ideas on Satan from Godwin, but it is more probable that he derived them from the writings of the Satanic School, with whom he was obviously familiar.[688] Bakunin did certainly read Proudhon (whom he deeply despised), but he, too, could have stumbled upon the Revolutionary Satan in many ways. Satan simply seemed to be in the air at this time. By the middle of the century, he had become a familiar topos that could be picked from the shelf at will by radical or freethinking writers. Romantic Satanism must have been the most important source from which they derived their utterances. The interplay between literature and ideology, however, undoubtedly was mutual. As we saw earlier, William Godwin's exposé of anarchist ideology had already provided one of the links in the chain of textual and personal influences that had engendered Romantic Satanism. In a way, we have described a

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[682] 'Chrétien, déiste, anti-théiste, je suis tout aussi religieux et presque dans les mêmes termes que vous.': *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église* [1858 edition], 2:607-608

[683] Although it must be remarked that his materialism sometimes takes on almost religious overtones: cf. Michael Bakunin, *God and the State* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), 13, 76.

[684] Bakunin, *God and the State*, 24, 25.

[685] Bakunin, *God and the State*, 10. *God and the State* was first published in French as *Dieu et l'état* in 1882, six years after Bakunin's death.

[686] Bakunin, *God and the State*, 12; 9.

[687] Bakunin, *God and the State*, 21.

[688] Proudhon, *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église* [1858 edition], 1:33. Godwin's *Enquiry* was not yet translated in French at this date.

nice full circle here, in which an isolated fragment from an anarchist philosopher managed to strike a spark into literature, and literature in its turn managed to leave behind Satan's claw marks in the writings of the later anarchist tradition.

During the nineteenth century, minor anarchist writers like Elisée Reclus and Paul Lafargue would occasionally echo Proudhon's and Bakunin's rhetorical appeals to the devil.[689] A similar background may have inspired the radical communard and feminist activist Paule Minck (1839-1901) in naming her child 'Lucifer-Blanqui-Vercingetorix-Révolution' and the American women's rights' activist Moses Hartman (1830-1910) in naming his periodical *Lucifer the Light-Bearer*.[690] Not much of this minor left-wing tradition seems to have survived into the twentieth century and the post-ideological world of today. Faint traces may be discerned in the dogmatic interpretation of Milton's Satan as 'cosmic revolutionary' that was de rigeur in Soviet literary studies, and in the 'over-the-shoulder acknowledgment' to Lucifer as 'first radical known to man' that graces the first pages of Saul Alinksy's *Rules for Radicals* (1971) – a classic of American left-wing activism that seems to have provided inspiration to Barack Obama.[691]

(re)constructing the history of Satanism

Paradoxically enough, the influence of Romantic Satanism on the perception of the West's religious past would prove to have a more tenacious afterlife. It might be true that identification with earlier attributed images of Satanism had not noticeably affected the rise of Romantic Satanism; but this certainly did not preclude an influence the other way around. Good and bad had changed sides, and this inevitably influenced the writing of history, in particular regarding those historical groups to whom Satanism had been attributed in earlier times. In this respect, too, the belles-lettres led the way. Shelley had already planned to picture a heretic group of serpent-worshipping Gnostics as an ideal society in his unfinished novel *The Assassins*, and the French Romantic Alphonse Esquiros had described medieval and early modern magic as a precursor for the French Revolution in his picturesque fiction *Le magicien* (1837).[692] In 1842, the French writer George Sand did the same for the medieval Luciferians in her immensely popular novel *Consuelo*. Sand (1804-1876), now mostly

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[689] Dvorak, *Satanismus*, 266-267.

[690] For Mincke, see Richard E. Burton, *Baudelaire and the Second Republic: Writing and Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 198.

For *Lucifer the Light-Bearer*, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucifer_the_Lightbearer (accessed 9 May 2012); some poorly scanned issues are available on http://libertarian-labyrinth.org/lucifer/ (accessed 9 May 2012). The periodical appeared from 1883-1907, gaining notoriety and legal harassment because of its discussion of sexual issues, and eventually eclipsed into the *American Journal for Eugenics*; according to the editor's colophon, 'The name Lucifer means Light-Bringing or Light-Bearing and the paper that has adopted this name stands for Light against Darkness – for Reason against Superstition – for Science against Tradition – for Investigation and enlightenment against Credulity and Ignorance – for Liberty against Slavery – for Justice against Privilege' (taken from *Lucifer the Light-Bearer* (27 July EM 301/CE 1901):875, 220) It is to be noted that nineteenth-century France had already known a short-lived radical periodical called *Satan*, which saw print from 1843 to 1844 and was initially directed by Francisque Borel and afterwards by his more famous younger brother, the *Bousingo* poet Pétrus Borel (see Enid Starkie, *Petrus Borel, the Lycanthrope: His Life and Times* (New York: New Directions, 1954), 146-147).

[691] Boss, *Milton and the Rise of Russian Satanism*, 140; Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Random House, 1971), ix. Alinsky seems to cite one of his own earlier works here; I have been unable to find out which. My attention to Alinsky was drawn by the Hon. James David Manning of Atlah World Ministries (although not by direct communication)

[692] Shelley, *Essays and Letters*, 159-179; Alphonse Esquiros, *Le Magicien* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1978), 132-133. Esquiros' novel may be considered as belonging at least in part to the tradition of Romantic Satanism; compare p. 121 ('Satan c'est le génie') and p. 131-132 ('voilà le but rayonnant vers lequel nous marchons en dehors de l'Église et de l'État: nous voulons être libres et dieux'). On Esquiros, compare Bénichou, *Le temps des prophètes*, 446-453, particularly 452-453.

remembered as the lover of the young Chopin (amongst others), was a devoted follower of the socialist humanism of the French philosopher Pierre Leroux; and the influence of the latter's ideas is also manifest in *Consuelo*. Written in typical nineteenth-century feuilleton style, it is not easy to sum up the meandering plot line of this work in a few lines. The main story revolves around the fictitious eighteenth century opera singer Consuelo. Arriving at a Bohemian castle to be a music teacher, she is introduced to Albert, the mysterious young heir of the noble family living there. Albert is commonly considered mad or possessed by his relations because he identifies himself with the Hussite heretics of yore – and this is where it gets interesting. Sand clearly sees the Hussite rebellion as a counterpart to the Revolution in her native France; and she also mixes the Hussites with another set of medieval heretics, the Lollards, one of the many groups accused of devil worship in the Middle Ages.[693] What is more, a small remnant of the Hussite movement turns out to be still extant in the countryside surrounding the castle, hailing each other with the Satanist greeting 'Que celui à qui on a fait tort te salute' (referring, of course, to Satan).[694]

Albert also belongs to this group. The Satanist Hussites, however, are anything but evil fiends lurking in the shadows, as Consuelo finds out after she manages to penetrate Albert's underground hide-about. 'Une secte mysterieuse et singulière rêva, entre beaucoup d'autres, de réhabiliter la vie de la chair […],' he explains to her, 'Elle voulut sanctionner l'amour, l'égalité, la communauté de tous, les éléments de bonheur. C'était une idée juste et sainte. Quels en furent les abus et les excès, il n'importe.'[695] Shortly after this, Satan himself appears to Consuelo in a vision, 'grand, pale and beautiful', and tells her that he has been tragically misunderstood: 'Je ne suis pas le démon, je suis l'archange de la révolte légitime et le patron des grandes luttes. Comme le Christ, je suis le Dieu du pauvre, du faible et de l'opprimé. […] O peuple! Ne reconnais-tu pas celui qui t'a parlé dans le secret de ton cœur, depuis que tu existes, et qui, dans toutes tes détresses, t'a soulagé en te disant: Cherche le bonheur, n'y renonce pas! Le bonheur t'est dû, exige-le, et tu l'auras!'[696]

Consuelo was conceived by Sand as a deliberate alternative history from a Leftist point of view. It was especially meant to counter antirevolutionary conspiracy theories that had been circulating in conservative circles since the events of 1789, purporting that the latter had been the result of an evil plot by anti-Christian forces dating back to the Manicheans through a long line of heretic groups and secret societies (we will return to these theories in more detail in a later chapter). In *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt* (the sequel to *Consuelo*, with even more twisted and improbable plot lines), this conspiracy turns out to exist indeed, as Consuelo is introduced to a secret society of 'Invisibles' which even a superficial educated reader will easily recognize as the Illuminati. With Sand, however, their secret venture is wholly dedicated to the doing of justice. '*Liberté*, *fraternité*, *égalité*: voilà la formule mystérieuse et profonde de l'œuvre des Invisibles.'[697] Their route through history is followed through to the French Revolution, which the reader is to understand as the true culmination point of Sand's story.

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[693] For her historical information, Sand relied mainly on an obscure book by Jacques Lenfant, *Histoire de la Guerre des Hussites et du Concile de Basle*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Pierre Humbert, 1731), especially 1:29-20. See also the article by Léon Guichard, 'L'occultisme dans Consuelo et la Comtesse de Rudolstadt,' in George Sand, *Consuelo. La Comtesse de Rudolstad*, 3 vols. (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1959), 1:xlvii-lxxviii, as well as Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:164-170.

[694] Also derived from Lenfant, *Histoire de la Guerre des Hussites*, 1:29.

[695] George Sand, *Consuelo. La Comtesse de Rudolstad*, 3 vols. (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1959), 2:19.

[696] Sand, *Consuelo. La Comtesse de Rudolstad*, 2:28, 29. It is to be noted that Sand, like most of the Romantics, is not anti-Christian here, in the sense of opposed to Christ.

[697] Sand, *Consuelo. La Comtesse de Rudolfstad*, 3:371.

The new reading of European religious history propounded in works like *Consuelo* also penetrated into professional historiography. It was in the history of witchcraft that the nineteenth-century concept of Satan would leave its deepest traces. Eighteenth-century Enlightenment had generally considered early modern witchcraft as a construct by the Church and the Inquisition, with no basis whatsoever in reality. In contrast to this view, a few late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century authors had raised the hypothesis that witchcraft might have been a surviving nucleus of pagan cults. Most of them had been 'reactionaries' who sought to defend the position of the Church – if there *had* been real witchcraft, the authorities had been right to defend society against this danger.[698] This hypothesis, however, was adapted and given a completely new twist by the French historian Jules Michelet (1798-1874) in his groundbreaking book *La Sorcière*. First published in 1862, this work can be regarded as the most prominent manifestation of the new, post-Revolutionary Satan in nineteenth century historiography.

Like Victor Hugo, with whom he was befriended, Michelet had started out as a royalist with a Romantic longing for the Middle Ages in the 1830s: and like Victor Hugo, he had gradually drifted into the radical and republican camp in the decades that followed.[699] Two things would be of special importance for Michelet's development: his discovery of Vico and his experience of the July Revolution of 1830. The first provided him with a theoretical framework to write history in a revolutionary, Romantic, and mythological way: Vico's principle of 'humanity creating itself' hitherto informed Michelet's activities as a historian in the broadest sense of the word.[700] The second event would prove a watershed in Michelet's political stance. 'During those memorable days a great light appeared, and I perceived France,' he would write in retrospective.[701] In his *Introduction à l'histoire universelle* (1831), which he had composed 'on the burning pavements of Paris' during the summer of 1830, he expounded a conception of the history of civilization as an ongoing process of human liberation: 'With the world began a war which will end only with the world: the war of man against nature, of spirit against matter, of liberty against fatality. History is nothing other than the record of this interminable struggle.'[702] This new outlook naturally changed his perception of Christianity. In his royalist days, he had described the medieval Church as the embodiment par excellence of the people, and the Christian faith as an essential evolutionary step in the humanity's development towards the ideal. Now, he began to grow more critical of the Christian religion, initially envisioning its transformation along humanist lines; eventually, its complete removal.[703] Satan's face began to change accordingly. In his personal diary, he had occasionally equated the fallen angel with Liberty and with the figure of Premetheus as early as 1825; in *Introduction à l'histoire universelle*, he stated: 'Le principe heroïque du monde, la liberté, longtemps maudite et confondue avec la fatalité sous le nom de *Satan*, a paru sous son vrai nom.'[704] As most other Romantics, this did not refrain him

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[698] Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, 103-125; Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 1:62; Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 136-137; Christa Tuczay, 'The nineteenth century: medievalism and witchcraft,' in *Palgrave Advances in Witchcraft Historiography*, ed. Jonathan Barry and Owen Davies (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 52-68. Heinrich Heine also supported this idea (from an opposite ideological position) in his famous essay from 1834, *De l'Allemagne depuis Luther*, and its 1853 sequel *Les dieux en exil*.

[699] On Michelet's Werdegang, see Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind*, 154, 198-202, and Bénichou, *Le temps des prophètes*, 497-564.

[700] The description of Vico's philosophy is from Michelet's own pen, who marked these two experiences as decisive himself: see Mali, *Mythistory*, 86.

[701] Quoted in Mali, *Mythistory*, 86.

[702] Both quotes from Mali, *Mythistory*, 86.

[703] Bénichou, *Le temps des prophètes*, 517. On Michelet's changing view of the Middle Ages, see Barbara G. Keller, *The Middle Ages reconsidered: Attitudes in France from the Eighteenth Century through the Romantic Movement* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 151-157.

[704] *Introduction à l'histoire universelle*, 27, quoted in Bénichou, *Le temps des prophètes*, 518; for the 1825 diary

from maintaining a positive appraisal of Jesus, whose Passion in reality is the plight of the oppressed.[705] (The many similarities we can detect here with Victor Hugo's ideas in *Fin de Satan* will hardly have been a coincidence.)

Michelet's growing radicalism eventually estranged him from the academic establishment. When he refused to sign a declaration of loyalty to Napoleon III, he lost his position at the Collège de France and at the national archives. After his dismissal, he continued to work as an independent historian, rewriting the volumes of his *Histoire de la France* into one great panegyric of Progress and Revolution, with the French people as its central character. In 1849, moreover, he married his second wife Athénaïs Mialaret, and this would set Michelet on the track that would eventually result in *La Sorcière*. His first marriage had not been very happy, but with the much younger Athénaïs, the veteran historian at last experienced marital bliss. He became interested in nature, in human physiology (particularly of the female body), in the social position of woman, and in the physical processes of love and digestion. These new interests led to new writings, some of which were rather unusual for a sixty year old historian. In 1860, for example, he began a lesbian erotic novel entitled *Sylvine, mémoires d'une femme de chambre*, and a biography of his wife's maiden years, *Mémoire d'une jeune fille honnête* – both of which his young wife dissuaded him from publishing.[706]

In the history of witchcraft, Michelet found a subject that allowed him to place his new discoveries in life on a historical canvas. In 1837, Michelet had still described witchcraft as the 'avorton dégoûtant des vieilles religions vaincues'. In 1840, this was changed to the more neutral 'débris de vieilles religions vaincues'.[707] *La Sorcière* would take this process a step further and expound a completely new theory on the origins of historical witchcraft. Initially, Michelet related in the book, the witches' Sabbath indeed had been nothing but a 'reste léger de paganisme […] un innocent carnival de serf' that had survived the coming of 'anti-natural' Christianity.[708] Only when the misery of the serfs reached unprecedented heights and issued in the great rural rebellions of the later Middle Ages, the Sabbath properly speaking had been born.[709] The Sabbath now became a rallying point against the oppression by Church and feudalism, obtaining a more and more explicitly antichristian character. 'Fraternité humaine, défi au ciel chrétien, culte dénaturé du dieu nature – c'est le sens de la *Messe Noire*.'[710]

Women had served as initiators of this new development, Michelet argued. Taking a decidedly feminist turn, he pictured how medieval woman in her misery found solace with the genii of the house – remnants of the friendly pagan gods of yore who help her with her chores and transmit the knowledge of the old ways. During the upheavals of the thirteenth century, and only then, these homestead spirits finally evolved into Satan, the 'grand serf Révolte, *celui à qui on a fait tort*, le vieux Proscrit'.[711]

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entry, see 559.

[705] See *Histoire de France* [1833 edition], 2:637-638: 'Oui, le Christ est encore sur la croix, et il n'en descendra point. La Passion dure et durera. Le monde a le sienne, et l'humanité dans sa longue vie historique, et chaque cœur de homme dans ce peu d'instants qu'il bat. A chacun sa croix et ses stigmates. Les miennes datent du jour où mon âme tomba dans ce corps misérable, que j'achève d'user en écrivant ceci. Ma Passion commença avec mon Incarnation […]. Vivre, c'est déjà un degré dans la Passion.' (Quoted in Bénichou, *Le temps des prophètes*, 521.)

[706] Wouter Kusters, *La Sorcière: Nouvelle édition critique avec introduction, variantes et examen du manuscrit* (Nijmegen: s.i., 1989), 20-21.

[707] Kusters, *La Sorcière*, 92.

[708] Jules Michelet, *La Sorcière: Nouvelle édition* (Bruxelles: A. Lacroix, Verboeckhoven & Cie, 1867), 141.

[709] Michelet, *La Sorcière*, 142-146.

[710] Michelet, *La Sorcière*, 146. Esquiros had already described the witches' Sabbath as an antiroyalist conspiracy in *Le magicien*, 195-203.

[711] Michelet, *La Sorcière*, 146.

Michelet's description of the cult of Satan is of singular interest. In *La Sorcière*, the celebrations of the Sabbath are led by a female high priest, the 'fiancée of the Devil', a woman with the beauty of sorrow and a flood of serpent-like black curls, 'je parle d'un torrent de noirs, d'indomptables cheveux'.[712] During the apogee of the Sabbath, a priapic statue is unveiled, and the black-curled priestess mounts this. 'Le dieu de bois l'acceuille comme autrefois Pan et Priape. Comformément à la forme païenne, elle se donne à lui, siège un moment sur lui, comme la *Delphica* au trépied d'Apollon. Elle en reçoit le soufflé, l'âme, la vie, la fécondation simulée.'[713] After this, an offering is made, with 'Woman herself' serving as an altar. 'Sur ses reins, un démon officiait, dirait le *Credo*, faisait l'offrande. […] On présentait du blé à *l'Esprit de la terre* qui fait pousser le blé. Des oiseaux envolés (du sein du femme sans doute) portaient au *Dieu de liberté* la soupir et le vœu des serfs.'[714] In a note, the historian adds that this 'charming offering' seemed to be specific for France – through all his ideological wanderings, Michelet would never cease to be a fervent French nationalist.

Modern historians mostly adopt an ironic view on the qualities of *La Sorcière* as serious, factual history. Although it features a fairly extensive bibliography (unusual for the time), it might be better to see the book as a deliberate counter myth, an attempt to uncover an anti-history that had remained hidden or unnoticed for centuries. It is also at times a hardly veiled pornographic novel. A hostile critic described Michelet's book as a deification of the flesh, 'presque une provocation à la debauche', and even one of his disciples compared the work to a canthárid.[715] Not surprisingly, *La Sorcière* was almost immediately placed on the Roman Index.[716] By then, the censors of Napoleon III had also stepped in and forbidden the sale of the book, eliciting letters of support from Victor Hugo and Georges Sand.[717] The authorities were keenly aware of the fact that something more than mere immorality was at stake, as is shown by a comment in an internal government report upon Michelet's publication: 'Représenter en quelque sorte Dieu comme le mal et le démon comme le régénateur, imputer les misères morales et matérielles de l'homme et de la femme au moyen âge à l'une des principales sources de la civilisation moderne, au Christianisme, c'est une thèse qui contient sa propre réfutation.'[718]
Of course, this was exactly the point *La Sorcière* wanted to make. Despite the copious references the book contains, it is clear that Michelet's work was not inspired by a calm new look at the sources. In fact, it is perfectly valid to consider *La Sorcière* as another example of Romantic Satanism. At least, this is where Michelet's inspiration must have come from. One of the few contemporary works explicitly mentioned in his text is George Sand's *Consuelo*. Although Michelet objected to Sand's ideas about reconciliation between Christ and Satan (which were, by the way, completely misrepresented by him), it is unmistakable that he was highly indebted to Sand for his treatment of 'him to whom injustice has been done'.[719] Even setting aside Sand's obvious influence, all the classic themes of Romantic Satanism can be

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[712] Michelet, *La Sorcière*, 148.
[713] Michelet, *La Sorcière*, 149.
[714] Michelet, *La Sorcière*, 150, 151. The 'demon' in the ceremony is a dressed-up peasant, Michelet explains on the same pages.
[715] Kusters, *La Sorcière*, 74, 72.
[716] Kusters, *La Sorcière*, 109n.
[717] Kusters, *La Sorcière*, 68, 110n.
[718] Kusters, *La Sorcière*, 60.
[719] Michelet erroneously supposes that Sand wanted to reconcile the *Church* with Satan, while she only speaks of *Christ* and the fallen angel. This misinterpretation has already been noted by Philippe Règnier, 'Le chaudron idéologique de La Sorcière: féminisme, homéopathie te saint-simonisme,' in *La Sorcière de Jules Michelet: L'envers de l'histoire*, ed. Paule Petitier, 127-148 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004), 129n; Michelet's remark in *La Sorcière*, 379-380.

seen to reappear in *La Sorcière*. To start with, the political significance of Michelet's medieval cult of the 'grand serf Révolte' is hard to miss. 'Sous l'ombre vague de Satan, le peuple n'adorait que le peuple,' Michelet comments. His efforts here amount to little more than reading the nineteenth-century revolutionary Satan into medieval history.[720] Also very prominent in Michelet is the connection between Satan and the reappraisal of nature, especially in its sexual aspects. One of the most salient features of the medieval cult of Satan is for Michelet 'la réhabilitation du ventre'; primarily of course the female womb, 'ce ventre adoré, trios fois saint, d'où le dieu homme naît, renaît éternellement'.[721] Medieval Satanism to him is one big revolt against the 'anti-nature' of Christianity. To conclude the list, the Satanic association with science makes its appearance as well. In an ingenious way, Michelet connects the folk medicine of the witch with the rise of the medical profession and the empiricism of modern science. Science has always been revolt, argues Michelet; magic, medicine, astrology, biology, 'tous […] ont été Satan'.[722] It is only after discerning this political, ideological, and spiritual agenda that we can understand why *La Sorcière* ends with a grand vision of coming cosmic unity, in which Michelet envisions the final triumph of science and the reunion of Satan with God, the 'femme-fée' with the 'homme-médecine', and humanity with nature.[723] 'L'anti-Nature pâlit, et le jour n'est pas loin où son heureuse éclipse ferait pour le monde une aurore.'[724]

Although the influence of his literary precursors is hard to deny, we should take care not to dispose of Michelet as a mere epigone altogether. He deserves credit for being the first in modern times to actually design a cult for Satan, placed in the misty medieval past as it may be. The elements of which he assembled this tableau of Satanist ritual were derived from wildly different times and sources. In the first place, of course, early modern concepts about Satanist witchcraft were reworked and reinterpreted by him into a new picture. The mounting of the priapic statue, on the other hand, is evidently based on similar rituals in Antiquity, while the application of the female body as an altar must have been inspired by the practices of Voisin and consorts during the *Affaire de Poisoins*. At the time Michelet wrote *La Sorcière*, the original documents concerning the latter event were still unpublished: but Michelet had probably been in contact with Ravaisson, the archivist who shortly was to include them in his monumental collection of Bastille archives.[725] Michelet is rather vague, it must be said, about the question how a ritual located by him in the High Middle Ages could suddenly resurface in late seventeenth-century Paris. Neither does he explain why his female altar is positioned *face down*, with her loins serving as an offering place, while the women in the Voisin affair had most certainly had *their* clandestine eucharist celebrated above their abdomen 'trois fois saint'. For this remarkable choice of posture, one suspects, Michelet must have consulted a different source, albeit a rather non-academic one: namely the violent scenes from the works of de Sade already cited in our first Intermezzo. (The marquise de Sade, of course, had had his own, highly personal reasons for preferring this reversal.)[726]

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[720] Michelet, *La Sorcière* 152.
[721] Michelet, *La Sorcière*, 125, 127.
[722] Michelet, *La Sorcière*, 389.
[723] Règnier, 'Le chaudron idéologique de La Sorcière,' 145.
[724] Michelet, *La Sorcière*, 383.
[725] As Michelet acknowledges in a footnote: *La Sorcière*, 150n.
[726] The altar position described by Michelet would find its reflection in the iconography of later decades; see for instance Martin van Maele illustrations for the 1911 edition of *La Sorcière*, or Manuel Orazi's lithos for Augustin de Croze's *Calendrier magique* from 1895 and for the 'messes noires' theme number of *L'Asiette au beurre* (12 December 1903):144, 15-16.

There is one other curious elelement of Michelet's reinvention of medieval Satanism that might be worth relating because of the curious consequences it would have. In a note at the end of *La Sorcière*, Michelet had hinted that the witch cult might not have disappeared completely after the end of the Middle Ages, but could well have survived in the countryside.[727] Already in 1899, this hint was picked up by the American folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland, with the publication of *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches*. It presented, according to Leland, 'a veritable Gospel of the Witches, apparently of extreme antiquity, embodying the belief in a strange counter-religion which had held its own from pre-historic times to the present day'. This 'gospel' had been delivered to him in manuscript form by a wandering Italian wise woman he only designated as Maddalena.[728] It told how Aradia (Herodias), daughter of Lucifer, god of light, and Diana, goddess of darkness, was sent to earth in human form to help to poor and oppressed. By teaching them the art of sorcery, she enabled them to strike back against their oppressors.[729] Before she departed again, Aradia had instructed her followers to convene with every full moon in a lonely part of the woods to hold a sort of alternative Supper of the Lord and receive further instruction in the art of witchcraft.

> And ye shall all be freed from slavery,
> And so ye shall be free in everything;
> And as the sign that ye are truly free,
> Ye shall be naked in your rites, both men
> And women: this shall last until
> The last of your oppressors shall be dead[730]

This celebration, of course, is the Witches' Sabbath, for which these instructions are given: 'And thus it shall be done: all shall sit down to the supper all naked, men and women, and, the feast over, they shall dance, sing, make music, and then love in the darkness, with all lights extinguished; for it is the Spirit of *Diana* who extinguishes them, and so they will dance and make music in her praise.'[731]

The salient resemblances of all this to Michelet's picture of medieval witchcraft are hard to miss. They were pointed out in passing by Leland himself, who only considered them as further proof that the text of his 'gospel' conformed to the historical realities of witchcraft. New was the fact, he declared, that he had uncovered the original scripture of the witch cult, which was presented to him partly in the original (mangled) Italian and partly in English translation, supplemented with fragments from his own folkloristic researches.[732] Moreover, he maintained that the 'Old Religion' was still alive as 'a fragmentary secret society or sect' in the Italian countryside, where entire villages could be found in which people were 'completely heathen'.[733] Yet like its rival, Roman-Catholicism, this ancient faith would quickly be reduced to oblivion by the relentless onset of modernity: 'a few more years of

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[727] Michelet, *La Sorcière*, 408n: 'mais il subsiste dans les campagnes.' It is unclear to what timeframe Michelet is here referring.

[728] Charles G. Leland, *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches* (London: David Nutt, 1899), x. Leland's explanations about his procurement of the manuscript and its nature can be found on pp. vi-vii, 101-102, and 116-117.

[729] Leland, *Aradia*, 1-5.

[730] Leland, *Aradia*, 6-7.

[731] Leland, *Aradia*, 14.

[732] Leland, *Aradia*, 101-102: 'Now be it observed, that every leading point which forms the plot or center of this *Vangel* […] had been told or written out for me in fragments by Maddalena (not to speak of other authorities), even as it had been chronicled by Horst or Michelet; therefore all this is in the present document of minor importance. All of this I expected, but what I did not expect, and what was new to me, was that portion which is given as prose-poetry and which I have *rendered* in meter or verse. This being traditional, and taken down from wizards, is extremely curious and interesting, since in it are preserved many relics of lore which, as may be verified from records, have come down from the days of yore.' (Horst is Georg Conrad Horst (1767-1832), a German scholar, and well-known compilator of source material concerning witchcraft.)

[733] Leland, *Aradia*, 116.

newspapers and bicycles (Heaven knows what it will be when flying-machines appear!) will probably cause an evanishment of all.'[734] Leland disclosed that the traditional nude banquets of Aradia were 'not much, if at all, kept up by the now few and far between old or young witches'. With his tongue firmly in cheek, he added that such practices were nevertheless not altogether uncommon among the '*roués*, *viveurs*, and fast women of Florence and Milan'. 'They are indeed far from being unknown in any of the great cities of the world. A few years ago a Sunday newspaper in an American city published a detailed account of them in the 'dance-houses' of the town, declaring that they were of very frequent occurrence, which was further verified to me by men familiar with them.'[735]

Satan in nineteenth century occultism[736]

For left-wing ideologists, Satan had primarily been a rhetorical tool to spice up their antireligious agitation. The Satanist fantasies of Sand, Michelet, and Leland had been projected upon the distant past or its relicts in picturesque rural areas. For possible instances of *actual* Satanism provoked by the new Romantic attitude towards the devil, we have to venture into the colourful landscape of alternative religiosity that took on an increasing presence in nineteenth century society. The most popular manifestation of this new field of religious expression during the nineteenth century was without doubt spiritism – establishing contact with the dead by way of séances with mediums or turning tables. Of course, the practice of consulting the dead – the original form of necromancy – was not an innovation of the nineteenth century at all, but something as old as the hills. It was rediscovered by the general public after the Fox sisters, three teenage girls in America, had started to communicate with a dead traveller by way of knocking signs in 1848. They became a *cas célèbre*, and the publicity surrounding them brought on a wave of séance-making and spirit-rapping that soon crossed the ocean to conquer the salons of Europe – with Victor Hugo and his circle among its first practitioners, as we have noted. Invoking the dead was now suddenly something one could do in civilized society, instead of in the backyards of rustic soothsayers.

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[734] Leland, *Aradia*, vi; compare 117 for similar sentiments.

[735] Leland, *Aradia*, 114-115. To my knowledge, a thorough scholarly examination of Leland and *Aradia* is still lacking. Academic scholarship is rightly doubtful about the authenticity of Leland's book, although it is as yet undecided whether Leland was pulling his readers' leg or had his own leg pulled by his informant. Cf. Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, 141-148.

[736] For a general introduction into the world of nineteenth century alternative religiosity, see, among others, McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe*, 147-170; Godwin, *Theosophical Enlightenment*; Christopher McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival* (London: Rider, 1972); Daniël van Egmond, 'Western Esoteric Schools in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,' in *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, ed. Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaf (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 311-346; James Webb, *The Occult Underground* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1974). I have relied on these works and more specific titles referenced in other footnotes to become familiar in the landscape of nineteenth-century esotericism and locate groups and authors that might be interesting with regard to their attitude to Satan. The limitations of this approach will be obvious. I would suggest that a further examination of the ideas regarding Satan within Saint-Simonism and the mystic socialism of Pierre Leroux might possibly yield interesting results, although the existing scholarly literature seems to have passed them by – including Max Milner, whose treatment of the theme of Satan in nineteenth-century French culture seems well-nigh encyclopedic to me. For further and more general deliberations concerning the problem of detecting 'hidden' groups of religious Satanists, see intermezzo 3.

A connection between Romanticism and post-Enlightenment esotericism in a general sense was already proposed by Wouter J. Hanegraaff: see for instance his article 'Romanticism and the Esoteric Connection,' in *Gnosis and Hermeticism: From Antiquity to Modern Times*, ed. Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 237-268. Among other elements, Hanegraaff also emphasized the importance of imagination, but tracing a different trajectory, which gives a prominent place for the German philosophers of Romanticism, while remaining unparticular about the precise lines of historical diffusion that transmitted Romantic notions into modern esotericism. I will discuss these matters more thoroughly in Chapter V and my conclusion.

The rapid onset of spiritualism was not coincidental. It came like a godsend at a time when many people were drifting away from Christianity but did not want to do without the solace of the transcendental and the prospect of life after death. In itself, spiritism was not necessarily antichristian. In the discrepancy of everyday practice, the spirits could take on every political and religious colour. In at least one instance, a man was converted to the belief in the triune deity by the spirits, while Victor Hugo had been encouraged by messages from Moses and Jesus to write his long poem on Satan.[737] By its more systematic propagators, however, spiritism was often presented as a more democratic and a more scientific alternative to the Christian faith; and what was more important, also as a more *humane* one. There was no hell and no judging deity in spiritualism. The beloved departed lived on in an undefined but usually not unpleasant spiritual sphere, the godhead was mostly perceived in friendly pantheistic terms. Consequently, there was little need for Satan as well. While spiritist theology usually acknowledged the existence of minor malevolent spiritual beings (usually the wanderings spirits of evil-doers who had to be brought to repent), it had no room for the Christian devil. The Fox sisters still had anxiously asked if they were not exchanging knocks with 'Mr. Splitfoot' during their earliest sessions: but their interlocutor had confidently replied that such was not the case.[738] This did not stop some conservative Christian critics to decry the hand of Satan in the new faith and allege that its practitioners were really communicating with demons, much as their precursors of centuries before had done with regard to necromancy.[739] Spiritists, however, were primarily interested in socializing with fellow human beings from beyond the grave, not in initiating contact with the evil entity of traditional religion.[740]

In the wake of the great rage of spiritualism, new, sophisticated forms of occultism arose. In common with spiritism, they promoted ways to transcendent knowledge that were presented as empirical or scientific findings, allowing access to spiritual power outside or alongside institutional Christianity. An important difference with spiritism, however, was the strong emphasis in occultism on 'ancient traditions' (real or imagined) as a foundation for its teachings.[741]

One of the most important pioneers of this form of alternative religiosity was Éliphas Lévi (1810-1875), the great French theoretician of occultism who, if not the actual inventor of the term occultism, certainly was responsible for making it popular.[742] Lévi had been born as Alphonse-Louis Constant and had initially wanted to become a Roman-Catholic priest. Enrolled on a strictly disciplined seminary, he had already taken vows as a deacon when he fell in love with one of his catechumens, a young girl 'still almost a child'.[743] This made him

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[737] Godwin, *Theosophical Enlightenment*, 172.

[738] Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 187.

[739] Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:348-349, 2:353-355; Régis Ladous, 'Le spiritisme et les démons dans les catéchismes français du XIXe siècle,' in *Le Défi Magique II: Satanisme, sorcellerie*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Martin and Massimo Introvigne (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1994), 203-228.

[740] R. Laurence Moore, 'Spiritualism,' in *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Edwin S. Gaustad (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 79-103; Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:348-355; Nicole Edelman, 'Diable et médium: Histoire d'une disparition,' in *Le Défi Magique II: Satanisme, sorcellerie*, ed. Martin and Introvigne, 321-329.

[741] Helmut Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung und gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884-1945*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 1:78, 82. Zander's remarks about theosophy here can be applied to occultism in general.

[742] According to Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 'Occult/Occultism,' in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff. 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 884-889, the word 'occultism' first appears in 1841; Éliphas Lévi mentions the term in *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2 vols. (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1910), 2 :161. Throughout this study, I will apply Hanegraaf's wider definition of occultism as a specific form of Western esotericism developed in reaction to the Enlightenment 'disenchantment' of the world.

decide that he was not fit for priesthood and that priesthood was not a vocation that was fit for man. In the following years, he would continually drift in and out the orbit of the church, at one time staying as a guest in the restored Benedictine Abbey of Solemnes, at other times living in cheap lodgings in the more squalid parts of Paris, scraping together a meagre living as a publicist, etcher, and painter of biblical scenes. Influenced by his reading of Georges Sand and the seventeenth-century mystic Jeanne Guyon, he began to tend towards a Christianity redefined along strongly pantheist lines, which he combined with radical Leftist views on social reform (his public endeavours in this respect would land him in jail twice).[744] Also during this period, he became amorously involved with a female teacher at the *pensionnat* where he was teaching, while at the same time exchanging tender letters with one of her pupils, an eighteen year old girl named Noémi Cadet. Although Constant's colleague became pregnant and eventually bore him a son, her pupil set the situation to her hand by climbing into his room one evening and staying the night. Her enraged father demanded marriage to avoid a scandal, and on 13 July 1846, Constant took the young girl for his wife.[745]

Giving the radical circles he frequented, it would be surprising if we did not find any traces of the new, revolutionary concept of Satan with Constant. In a private poem he wrote to Noémi Cadet, the atmosphere of Romantic Satanism is already tangible:

> If you want to be mine, be dead, be damned;
> Be without parents, without God, without law, without past memories.
> When I say to you: come, let your pride confront
> Not hunger, not death; that would be a small thing: but shame!
> And you will arrive, superb child with heart of steel,
> To lift your head against God from the bottom of our hell.
>
> (Si tu veux être à moi, sois morte, sois damnée;
> Sois sans parents, sans Dieu, sans loi, sans souvenir.
> Quand je te dirai: viens, que ton orgueil affronte
> Non la faim, non la mort; ce serait peu: la honte!
> Et tu viendras, superbe enfant au cœur de fer,
> Lever ton front vers Dieu du fond de notre enfer.)[746]

It was probably another woman, however, who had introduced Constant to the Romantic Satan. In 1838, he had become acquainted with Flora Tristan (1803-1844), a woman of partly Peruvian descent who was active in France and England as a socialist and feminist agitator.[747] A great deal of the highly idiosyncratic, socialism-flavoured theology Constant was propagating in his publications during these years almost certainly derived from her influence, including some of his more unusual ideas about Satan. To what extent he was indebted to

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[743] Abbé Constant, *L'Assomption de la femme ou le Livre de l'Amour* (Paris: Aug. le Gallois, 1841), xv ; pp. iii-xxviii of this publication contains an autobiographical sketch by Constant. A scholarly biography of Lévi remains a desirandum. Paul Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi: Rénovateur de l'occultisme en France (1810-1875)* (Paris: Librairie Géneral des Sciences Occultes Chacornac Frères, 1926), provides a wealth of details but also has the character of a hagiography; McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi*, mostly bases himself on Chacornac, although adding much information on Lévi's subsequent influence. I have gratefully profited from Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 'The Beginnings of Occultist Kabbalah: Adolphe Franck and Eliphas Lévi,' in *Kabbalah and Modernity: Interpretations, Transformations, Adaptations*, ed. Boaz Huss, Marco Pasi, and Kocku von Stuckrad (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 107-128, which he put at my disposal in digital from before publication. While finishing this text, I stumbled upon a reference to Daniel S. Larangé, 'Théologie mariale et discours féministe: la foi romantique en l´avenir du pouvoir féminin selon l´abbé Alphonse-Louis Constant,' *Tangence* 94 (autumn 2010): 113-134, which I unfortunately was unable to consult on such short notice.

[744] Constant, *L'Assomption de la femme*, xix-xxi; Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 41-42. The work of Sand mentioned here by Lévi is *Spiridion*, and not *Consuelo*, contra Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:249.

[745] Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 95-98.

[746] Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 98-99; requoted in Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:253.

[747] Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 32-33. Tristan was the maternal grandmother of the painter Paul Gaguin.

Tristan remains an open question. While most of Levi's biographers agree that she was an essential source of inspiration for him during this period, they also mention the strong ascendancy Constant had over this flamboyant woman, for whom he functioned as a sort of spiritual advisor.[748] The similar theologies they espoused can thus have well been the result of their mutual interaction. Another problem is the fact that we only know about Tristan's theological ideas through one posthumous publication, a book that was completed and published by Constant. Although the latter declared that he had faithfully reproduced Tristan's ideas, it is without doubt that he changed and expanded the original text, at least in matters of style.[749] Because it is impossible for us to untie this intricate knot, I will treat the esoteric œuvre of Constant and Tristan as part of one evolving body of work here, giving a short chronological overview of their relevant publications and the notions they contain with regard to Satan.

- A restyled devil makes its first appearance with Constant in his *Bible de la Liberté* from 1841, an esoteric and socialist rereading of the bible that would earn him a prison term of eleven months.[750] During the same year, Constant expanded upon the teachings of *La Bible de la Liberté* in two other publications, *Doctrines religieuses et sociales* and *L'assomption de la femme*. The three works are all characterized by a similar radical vision upon society and spirituality, featuring the familiar set of religious humanism, communism, feminism, pantheism, anticlericalism, sexual liberation, French messianism, and religious universalism that we have already encountered in bits and pieces by the earlier Romantic Satanists. Most remarkable, however, is the strong millennialism in which these books are drenched. Drawing on Roman-Catholic speculations that date back at least to the heretic medieval mystic Joachim of Fiore, Constant predicted the arrival of the Age of the Holy Spirit in which mankind would be free and live in direct contact with the divine. This age of the Holy Spirit was also going to be the Age of Woman. In the words of Constant:

> The six thousand years that our world has already lasted are the great week of divine creation.
> Christ has been the heavenly Adam who God has made in his image upon the sixth day.
> At this moment of time, this man is tired of being alone, and he has fallen into a profound lethargy.
> And God is going to draw the female from his side that has been opened by the lance; and this woman will be the mother of the living, and heaven and earth shall adore her.
> She will appear from the side of Christ, of whom she is already the mother; and she will become his bride, and their first kiss will have as its fruit a happiness that shall have no ending anymore.[751]

In the slightly incestuous variation on Joachim of Fiore that Constant propounded, the latter's theories were consistently reinterpreted from a viewpoint of humanism and Christian communism, with the Son identified with the people: 'Behold the second coming of Christ incarnated in humanity; behold the Man-People and God revealing himself.'[752] Apart from

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[748] Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 35: 'on peut dire que Flora Tristan a été l'initiatrice du futur auteur de la *Bible de la Liberté*'; 33: 'sa parole exerça-t-elle sur Flora Tristan un grand ascendant.' Constant's advices were not always on the mark, for instance when he advised Tristan to be indulgent with the husband she had left: shortly afterwards, her irate ex-man attempted to kill her with a pistol (ibidem, 33-35).

[749] Cf. Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 81.

[750] Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 47-54, 59.

[751] Alphonse Constant, *La Bible de la Liberté* (Paris: Le Gallois, 1841), 11. Constant was already introduced to theories about the Age of the Holy Spirit by one of his tutors on the seminary; Constant, *L'Assomption de la femme*, iv-vi.

[752] Constant, *Bible de la Liberté*, 'Préface': 'Voilà le second avènement du Christ incarné dans l'humanité; voilà l'homme peuple et Dieu qui se révèle.' Agulhon, *Marrianne au combat*, 73-77, gives some more examples of the peculiar confusion of feminist messianism, millennialism, Marial devotion, and political radicalism that sometimes could be found in French radical circles during this period.

this, we encounter a very Romantic Lucifer on the pages of *La Bible de la Liberté*. The ruler of darkness is presented as the Angel of Liberty, Light, and Science, a 'generous spirit of revolt and noble pride'.[753] Lucifer's revolt against the deity, Constant maintains, was a necessary act of freedom and love.[754] Elsewhere, this restyled Lucifer is contrasted with Satan, who is treated as a separate entity and retains his function as representative of evil, although this evil is defined along new ideological lines:

> The spirit of evil is not Lucifer, the glorious rebel; it is Satan, the angel of domination and slavery.
> It is Satan who tempts the world, and it is Lucifer who saves it by raising it up against Satan!
> Satan is the father of law; Lucifer is the father of grace.
> Despotism is death; liberty is life.
> Despotism is the flesh; liberty is the spirit.
> Despotism is hell; liberty is heaven.[755]

The mythological potpourri that characterizes the book is given additional complexity in a chapter at the end, where Constant addresses the adherents of Islam, announcing that at the nearby end of times, Christ is going to marry 'the most beautiful of *houris*: Holy Liberty' – while earlier, he equated this very same Liberty to the deity tout court, who is now sleeping but will soon awaken.[756]

- In *La Mère de Dieu*, published 1844, much the same themes reappear, but with different mythological accents. As its title suggests, the star of this work is Mary, Mother of God. Even more peculiar than his earlier publications, the book purports to recount the vision of an angel experienced by Constant while in prison in 1841. This vision, he writes, has inspired him to return to the fold of the Church; and in accordance with this intention, the book is preceeded by a notice in which Constant declares his 'complete submission to the holy Catholic church', to whose judgments he surrenders his work.[757] Although containing much the same notions as his earlier works, the myth of Satan is reworked in a different way in *Mère de Dieu*. In his vision, Constant witnesses how 'Satan the rebel' presents himself before Christ at the Last Judgment. The devil declares that he cannot surrender to the godhead because he cannot love, and he starts to battle with the heavenly hosts, every blow expressing a thought of revolt or desperation. Eventually, he defeats the angels and approaches the throne of Mary and Jesus, but the light of love they radiate renders him impotent. He kneels for Mary, transforms into a serpent, and lays his head for the feet of 'Regenerated Eve': 'and as soon as that delicate foot had touched his forehead, he closed his eyes and seemed to expire; a last sigh of fire escaped from his half-open jaws, and that flame took the form of a star that ascended and set itself on the right hand of Christ. Then a voice was heart from heaven that cried: Evil in its death has borne light; Satan has died and Lucifer is delivered.'[758]

The re-born Morning Star is placed upon the forehead of Mary, and Mary and the 'Man-God' (Christ) become the divine couple, with a new child to form a new trinity (or so it seems at least).[759] The Holy Mother next reveals that human progress will go on forever, in different

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[753] Constant, *Bible de la Liberté*, 17-19, 18.
[754] Constant, *Bible de la Liberté*, 19.
[755] Constant, *Bible de la Liberté*, 22.
[756] Constant, *Bible de la Liberté*, 31, 99: 'Jésus va épouser la plus belle des houris: la Liberté Sainte qui vient de vous apparaître, et dont les doux regard a fait tressaillir l'orient.'
[757] Alphonse Constant, *La Mère de Dieu, épopée religieuse et humanitaire* (Paris: Librairie de Charles Gosselin, 1844), 168-169, 6.
[758] Constant, *Mère de Dieu*, 265: 'et lorsque ce pied délicat eut touché son front, il ferma les yeux et sembla expirer; un dernier soufflé de feu s'échappa de sa gueule entr'ouverte, et cette flamme prit la forme d'une étoile qui monta d'elle-même et alla se poser dans la main droite du Christ. Puis on entendit une voix du ciel qui criait: Le mal en expirant a enfanté la lumière; Satan est mort et Lucifer est délivré.'
[759] Constant, *Mère de Dieu*, 266-267.

shapes, and an utopian picture of a new, matriarchal society is given, in which, among other things, all women will be virgins and mothers at the same time; and if a man lives under their roof, he will be 'nothing more in the eyes of the world than their Joseph and the guardian of their children'.[760]

One cannot help to wonder what the ecclesiastical authorities may have thought of all this, but unfortunately enough, an official reaction seems not to have been left to us.

- More such theological creativity may be found in *L'Emancipation de la Femme, ou le testament de la paria* ('The Emancipation of Woman, or the Testament of the Pariah'), the posthumous tome by Tristan Flora that appeared in 1846, 'completed after her notes and published by A. Constant'. Starting out with a bitter complaint about the social position of women and the poor, and especially of poor women, Tristan in this book gradually drifts into esoteric discourse. Although man may be superior in intelligence, she maintains, woman surpasses man in feeling, faith, and love, and therefore the coming Age of the Holy Spirit will be reigned by the maternal 'genius' of woman. In order to attain this happy state, the male and female principle must come together. Intelligence must fuse with love, liberty with life. And the proper symbol for this New Age is, somewhat surprisingly, not the traditional dove, but the light-bearing angel, Lucifer. In Tristan's words:

> Lucifer, the angel of genius and science whom the superstitions of the Middle Ages have relegated to the throne of hell, now finally set free together with the human conscience, ascends in triumph towards heaven again, with his star on his forehead, and in his right hand the torch that will not be extinguished.
>
> The Holy Spirit, too, has now, like the Father and the Son, received a human form to be invoked in by men, and the symbolic dove has folded its white wings again.
>
> The spirit of intelligence and of love now must show itself to the world in the young and smiling features of Lucifer![761]

The resemblance of Tristan's portrait of the fallen angel with the Genius of Liberty at the Place de la Bastille is intentional, by the way: a 'sacred instinct' has led the French people to erect this monument to the 'young and glorious Lucifer'.[762] Apart from Satan, Christ also has a role to play in Tristan's scheme for the final days: but not the powerless Christ who is nailed to the cross; the radical feminist rather has need of a triumphant Christ. 'I want the marriage of Christ with the bride of the Song of Songs. […] I want to see him ascend to heaven in triumph again after shattering the gates of antique Tartaros, to free the beautiful angel Lucifer, the genius of light and liberty. Then Mary, the regenerated woman, will extend her arms to both of them and bury them under her caresses; the new Eve will pride herself upon the martial conquests of Jesus, her divine Abel, and she will weep when seeing the sweetness of Lucifer, Cain's angel, repentant and regenerated in his turn!'[763]

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[760] Constant, *Mère de Dieu*, 364, 355: 'il n'est aux yeux du monde que leur Joseph et le gardien de leurs enfants'.

[761] Flora Tristan and A. Constant, *L'Emancipation de la Femme, ou le testament de la paria* (Paris: Bureau de la direction de *La Vérité*, 1846), 37: 'Lucifer, l'ange du génie et de la science que les superstitions du moyen âge avaient relégué sur le trône des enfers, délivré enfin avec la conscience humaine, remonte triomphant vers le ciel, avec son étoile sur le front, et dans la main droite ce flambeau qui ne s'éteint pas.

Le Saint-Esprit a maintenant aussi, comme le Père et le Fils, une figure humaine pour être invoqué par les hommes, et la colombe symbolique a replié ses blanches ailes.

L'esprit d'intelligence et d'amour doit se manifester maintenant au monde sous les traits jeunes et souriants de Lucifer!'

[762] Tristan, *L'Emancipation de la Femme*, 36.

[763] Tristan, *L'Emancipation de la Femme*, 44-45: 'Je veux le mariage du Christ avec l'épouse du cantique. […] Je veux le voir triomphant remonter au ciel après avoir brisé les portes du Tartare antique, pour délivrer le bel ange Lucifer, le génie de la lumière et de la liberté. Alors Marie, la femme régénérée, leur tendra les bras à tous deux et les comblera de ses caresses ; la nouvelle Eve s'enorgueillira des conquêtes guerrières de Jésus, son divin Abel, et elle pleurera en voyant la douceur de Lucifer, l'ange de Caïn, repentant et régénérée à son tour !'

- In his postscript to this incongruous feast of blurred symbolisms, Constant distances himself somewhat from his erstwhile mentor (who had thought of herself as the 'female Messiah', he insinuates).[764] Her beliefs are not his anymore, he writes; he has changed. But Flora has changed even more, she now is dead: and this fact to Constant seems the most eloquent rejoinder against the utopianisms of those that dream of attaining perfection on this earth. Man's only hope, he continues, is Christ, 'the man-God': and the true keeper of his legacy is the hierarchical church, which will adopt 'French ideas' soon, Constant foresees.

It must be said, however, that this reluctance regarding utopian speculation does not become apparent right away, because Constant's subsequent publication, *La derniere incarnation: legendes evangeliques du XIXe siecle* ('The Last Incarnation: Evangelical Legends of the Nineteenth Century'), once again is rich with millennialism dreams. In this charming collection of stories, published in 1846, Constant attempts to 'complement' the Gospels by describing a second coming of the 'proletarian from Galilee' to nineteenth-century Europe. Most interesting probably is the penultimate legend, in which Jesus – accompanied, of course, by his mother Mary – encounters Satan sitting on a rock near Calvary.[765] The fallen angel, bored with his work of petty corruption, makes a rather feeble attempt to tempt Jesus once again, and criticizes the deity in terms that closely resemble the acrid monologues by Byron's Lucifer in *Cain*. Jesus, however, unmasks his remarks as mere human disfigurements of the divinity, and he rejoins the devil to become Lucifer again, 'a star on your forehead and a torch in your hand'. Moved by the love of Jesus and Mary, Satan sheds his one decisive tear, and transforms into the angel of light again. Jesus, Mary, and Satan – who, incidentally, turn out to be one single spirit of 'intelligence and love' and 'liberty and life' after all – ascend to heaven together. While they are midway, the gigantic form of Prometheus, freed from his vultures, also arises. 'Thus the great divine and human symbols came together and greeted each other under the same heaven; after which they disappeared to make place for God himself who came to live among mankind forever.'[766]

- Even more explicit reminiscences of Tristan's ideas can be found in *Le Testament de la Liberté* from 1848. Immediately on page one, Constant starts out with an alternative version of the fall of Satan that comes straight out of *L'Emancipation de la Femme*, with a few minor changes and some new material added. In this new myth, Lucifer is depicted as the original Intelligence that has sprung into being from the very breath of the creator's 'Let there be light', created by the divine Word in order to express itself and be seen. The newly born angel of light and its divine maker next engage in the following dialogue:

> – I will not be Servitude!
> – Then you will be Grief, the uncreated voice spoke to him.
> – I will be Liberty! answered the light.
> – Pride will seduce you, continued the supreme voice; and you will give birth to Death.
> – I need to struggle against Death to conquer Life, responded the created light.[767]

Lucifer subsequently descends to earth, and in an undeniably original twist, Constant lets him become the mother (sic) of two daughters: Liberty, who springs from his forehead, and

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[764] Constant in Tristan, *L'Emancipation de la Femme*, 116.

[765] Alphonse Constant, *Le dernière incarnation: Légendes évangeliques du XXIe siècle* (Paris: Libraire sociétaire, 1846), 109-114.

[766] Constant, *Le dernière incarnation*, 114.

[767] Alphonse Constant, *Le Testament de la Liberté* (Paris: J. Frey, 1848), 1-5, there 2-3:
'– Je ne serais pas la servitude!
– Tu seras donc la douleur, lui dit la voix incréée.
– Je serais la Liberté! répondit la lumière.
– L'orgueil te séduira, reprit la voix suprême; et tu enfanteras la mort.
– J'ai besoin de lutter contre la mort pour conquérir la vie, dit encore la lumière créée.'
Compare Tristan, *L'Emancipation de la Femme*, 37-40.

Poetry, who escapes with a sigh from his heart. While Liberty is hidden by Lucifer, his daughter Poetry may roam free. She remains close to her sister, however, and thus 'youthful Poetry […] will always serve as a guide for those who carry to the future that sacred depository [e.g., freedom] sent by the angel of Intelligence'.[768] In the end, Love will come to liberate cq. marry Lucifer, and Liberty will be released to rejoin her sister Poetry: 'Both will then cross the globe and submit the world through the magic of their beauty and the irresistible seduction of their voice.'[769]

Although they may strike the average reader as unintentionally verging on the comical, this digest of Constant's earliest works shows crystal clear how squarely his treatment of Satan is rooted in the tradition of Romantic Satanism – especially in its manifestation *à la française*, with its great love for reconciliation scenarios between deity and devil. One only has to point out the identification of Lucifer with liberty (implicitly or explicitly linked to 'the great, the holy, the sublime French revolution'), and his strong association with 'Intelligence', science, and poetry. That Constant, as an ordained deacon, continued to see himself as a Catholic, does not change this basic fact. It may be evident, moreover, that we have to consider his Christianity as Blake's: a highly personal construct that did not necessarily comply with traditional dogma. Nor is Constant to be considered as merely epigenous in his Romantic Satanism: his creations, for one thing, probably were an important source of inspiration for Victor Hugo's *Fin de Satan*, whose author was demonstrably familiar with Constant's work.[770]
A more complicated question concerns the exact spiritual status of Constant's texts. We have already seen the ambiguous and complicated relation of the major Romantic Satanists to myth. This ambiguity is also present with Constant, and in a more intense form. The tone of his works definitely gives the impression as doctrinal – especially in the case of *Mère de Dieu*, which is presented as a direct revelation by an angel, but also in his other publications from this period. They are presented as expositions of theology or dogma, not as myths of identification that primarily serve to engage on an imaginary psychological voyage to change our ideological outlook. Yet at the same time, a relativist awareness of myth as a human creation is also visible with Constant. This tension becomes most evident in *La Dernière Incarnation*, a set of 'new evangelic legends' that was unambiguously introduced as a fiction by Constant, but at the same time does not differ in its presentation from his visionary works in any noticeably way. Jesus, Mary, and Satan are here clearly described as 'symbolic forms', and heaven as 'the region of the ideal' and 'the spiritual world of poetry and vision'; Aeschylus, Moses, and John the Evangelist have all derived their inspiration from here.[771] In *Testament de la Liberté*, the Book of Revelation is likewise described as a glimpse into 'the abstract regions of thought and poetry'.[772] One may surmise that Constant's own latter-day visions in *Mère de Dieu* can also be interpreted along these lines: in apocalyptic times like these, he claims in the beginning of this book, 'men of desire' are 'easily visionary'.
With Constant, we thus encounter a Romantic author formulating religious revelation in the apparent consciousness that he is doing so through his imagination. The idea that allows this to make sense, and forms another *traîte d'union* with the (other) Romantic Satanists, is the

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[768] Constant, *Testament de la Liberté*, 9.
[769] Constant, *Testament de la Liberté*, 9.
[770] Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:410; Auguste Viatte, *Victor Hugo et les Illuminés de son temps* (Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Arbre, 1942), 171-172. In 1873, Hugo and Lévi met each other personally, according to Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 278 – 'le grand poète connaissait, paraît-il, les ouvrages du Kabbaliste, et les avait même appréciés […]'. On Constant's embedment in Romanticism, see also Bénichou, *Le temps des prophètes*, 435-446.
[771] Constant, *Le dernière incarnation*, 113-114. In another legend, Constant describes the archetypical poet as inspired by the Holy Spirit; ibidem, 98.
[772] Constant, *Testament de la Liberté*, 60.

oneness of the divine and the human. This notion is present in almost all of Constant's works, and also in that of Tristan. God, in fact, is the 'synthesis of humanity' for Constant; in accordance with humanity's stage in its march to progress, the ideas about the godhead change, moving closer and closer to the complete 'incarnation' of the divine.[773] The Christian-socialist poet showed he was acutely aware of the vital importance of religious concepts for social and political questions: in *Doctrines religieuses et sociales*, for instance, he argues that a transcendent idea of the divine will necessarily mirror itself in autocratic or oppressive forms of government. This music will by now sound familiar to the reader. Although we can assume he was completely unaware of the work of these English poets, Constant's project at this stage was basically the same as that of Blake and Shelley – changing the religious and ideological outlook of society by creatively reworking its old myths.

The 1850s brought a set of landmark changes to the life of Constant. Already during the 1840s, Constant had started to immerse himself in the 'occult sciences'. His interest in this subject had been awakened by books (particularly Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbala Denudata* from 1684) and by his acquaintance with the mathematician, visionary, and esoteric Josef Hoëné-Wronski (1776-1853).[774] An archetypical 'mad scientist', Hoëni-Wronski is mainly remembered in occult literature for his 'prognometer', an intricate machine that he claimed could foretell the future.[775] But what must have inspired Constant most about Wronski would probably have been the latter's claim to have found a mystic-mathematic 'theory of everything'.[776] References to a similar project of synthesis between science and faith start to appear in Constant's last two books of the 1840s and would turn out to be programmatic for his later occult publications.

In the same period, Constant gradually drifted away from his former political convictions, while on the personal plane, his young wife Noémi eloped with a befriended progressive publisher.[777] Abandoned, heart-broken, and poor, Alphonse-Louis Constant the Radical now became Éliphas Lévi the Magician. It was under this pen name that *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* ('Dogma and Ritual of High Magic', 1854-1856) was published, a book that would prove to be the cornerstone for modern ceremonial magic and leave a lasting imprint on occultism in general. Other works on magic and the Kabbalah would follow, among which especially *Histoire de la magie* ('The History of Magic', 1860) and *La Clef des grands mystères* ('The Key of the Great Mysteries', 1861) must be mentioned.

A different world of thought and a different tone of voice is found in these works. For one, references to the 'religion' of socialism or communism are conspicuously absent. Although Lévi probably retained his faith in the future 'millennium' all his life (his last recorded words express his hopes for the advent of the Comforter), allusion to the coming Age of the Holy Spirit have been considerably toned down as well.[778] We will get unto this aspect later on. Even more fundamental may be the wholly different way in which Constant (which we will call henceforth by his more famous pseudonym Lévi) proceeds to legitimise his philosophical

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[773] Constant, *Mère de Dieu*, 273.

[774] On Kabbalah, and other readings: Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 129-130.

[775] Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 137-139. The prognometer would later end up in the hands of Constant himself. Modern scholarly literature on Hoëni-wronski is practical non-existent; one of the few exceptions is an introductory article by Roman Murawski, 'The Philosophy of Hœne-Wronski,' *Organon* 35 (2006): 143-150.

[776] McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi*, 98.

[777] Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 140-141.

[778] Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 281, quoting an account by one Madame Hutchinson, in *L'Initiatio*n, 16 (August 1892) 11:135: 'Il savait certainement qu'il allait mourir, car ses yeux prirent une expression extatique que je ne leur avais jamais vu, pour me dire, en désignant le Christ: 'Il a dit qu'il en verrait le Consolateur: l'*Esprit*, et maintenant, j'attend l'*Esprit*, l'*Esprit Saint*!'

and theological assertions. In contrast to his appeal to vision, poetry, and revelation in earlier works, and in contrast also to the otherworldly sources invoked by spiritism (with which he had experimented briefly), Lévi now claims to base his findings on science.[779] This science does not consist of physics or mathematics, but of the systematic examination and interpretation of the old religious and esoteric traditions of the world to rediscover their hidden meaning – the 'Key' to the great mysteries. *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* and Lévi's other works occasionally contain indications for preparing and performing rituals, yet they are clearly not meant as practical manuals. Rather, they provide an exposition of an alternative view on the world, in which elements of Lévi's radical past, a new conservatism, and a human-centred, Romantic panentheism merge together with elements of older esoteric traditions into an uneasy synthesis. Nowhere does this become clearer than in Lévi's treatment of Satan.

Three, maybe four, different components can be distinguished in Lévi's representation of Satan. First, traces of the Romantic Satan remain present in *Dogme et rituel* and its sequels. Lévi was an avid recycler of his own texts, and amongst other examples, the myth of origin of Lucifer we cited from *Le Testament de la Liberté* appears again in the pages of *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*. Typically, Lévi now attributes this to a 'Gnostic evangel' recently unearthed in the Orient 'by a learned traveller among our friends'.[780] Although he seems to range this myth among the errors of the 'heresiarchs of the first centuries', in later works, he reconfirms his old Romantic conception of Lucifer as angel of liberty and of intelligence.[781] These terms, however, have not the same exact meaning anymore, as we shall see presently.

With respect to the traditional concept of the devil as supernatural representative of evil, Lévi is quite clear: 'Satan as a superior personality and as a power does not exist'.[782] Absolute evil can only exist as a negation and a non-entity: the idea that such an ontological void can take a personal, individual form is dismissed by Lévi as part 'of the relicts of Manichaeism that still manifest themselves among our Christians time and again.'[783] Intriguingly enough, this does not mean that this Satan has no presence in reality at all. 'Within its circle of operation, every word creates what it affirms,' argues Lévi elsewhere. Consequently, 'he who affirms the devil creates or constructs the devil'.[784] The devil becomes real because he is made real in the imagination of its believers. 'That black giant that extends his wings from the east to the west to hide the light from the world, that soul-devouring monster, that terrifying deity of ignorance and fear, in one word, the devil, is yet for an immense mass of children of all ages a terrible reality.'[785]

Here we see reappear the Romantic idea of the human imagination as creator, albeit in a decidedly harmful application. Lévi was not afraid to apply this idea to biblical scripture as well. In *La Clef des grands mystères*, he gives a daring 'occult' reading of Genesis in which the creation myth is retold as the story of the creation of the deity by man:

> Eternally the immensity of the heavens and the expansion of the earth have created in man the idea of God.

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[779] On spiritism: Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:265-266.
[780] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:10.
[781] Éliphas Lévi, *La Clef des grands mystères, suivant Hénoch, Abraham, Hermés Trismégiste et Solomon* (Paris: Félix Alcan, [1923]), 23-25, 66. There is even a spark of his old millennialism here ('Glory to the Holy Spirit who has promised the conquest of heaven and earth to the angel of liberty!').
[782] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:230.
[783] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:230-231; Éliphas Lévi, *Histoire de la magie, avec une exposition claire et précise de ses procédés, de ses rites et de ses mystères* (Paris: Germer Ballière, 1860), 200.
[784] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:244: 'Dans le cercle de son action, tout verbe crée ce qu'il affirme. […] Celui qui affirme le diable crée ou fait le diable.'
[785] Lévi, *Clef des grands mystères*, 250.

> But this idea remained indeterminate and vague, it was a mask of darkness over an immense phantom; and the spirit of man floated over these conceptions as over the face of the waters.
>
> Man then said: Let there be a supreme intelligence! And there was a supreme intelligence. And man saw this idea, that it was good; and he divided the spirit of light from the spirit of darkness. He called the spirit of light: God, and the spirit of darkness: the devil, and he created to himself a kingdom of good and a kingdom of evil. This was the first night.[786]

It therefore makes sense for Lévi to conclude that 'the devil is nothing but the shadow of the phantom of God'.[787] And because the image of the devil consists of all kind of debris from the 'rebutted gods' of yore, it is only to be expected, he writes, 'to see the god of our barbaric fathers become the devil of our more enlightened children'.[788]

Alongside these two types of Satan, a third and completely novel definition of the devil appears in *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* and Lévi's other works. On about every third page, Satan is presented as an impersonal cosmic force, a morally neutral 'blind agency' that is indispensable for the preservation of a heterogeneous reality. 'In nature, there exists a force that does not die,' Lévi claims, 'And that force incessantly transforms all beings in order to preserve them.'[789] By identifying this 'blind agency' as 'astral light', Lévi was able to connect his older account of Lucifer as an angel of light created on the first day with his new idea of Satan as a morally neutral cosmic force of life.

This novel understanding of Satan in *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* seems to have been an original innovation of Lévi. We can not delve into all the possible sources of inspiration for his invention. However, one deserves a brief mention.[790] In various works from the early decades of the nineteenth century, the French esoteric Fabre d'Olivet (1767-1825) had proposed a different reading of the Hebrew text of Genesis. His insights had prompted him to make a translation of Byron's *Cain* (the very first in the French language, as a matter of fact) accompanied with extensive notes in which he sought to refute the British poet's pernicious suggestions. One of the points on which D'Olivet disputed Byron was the nature of the Serpent of Paradise. A naïve and incorrect translation of the original Hebrew had been responsible for the appearance of this animal in the first books of Genesis, Fabre d'Olivet maintained. In reality, the Hebrew word that the authors of the Bible had used should be rendered more or less like 'innate attraction'. The serpent thus was 'not a distinct, independent being, as you [Byron] have painted Lucifer according to the system that Manes has lent from the Chaldeans and the Persians, but rather a central mobilizing force given to matter, a hidden energy, a yeast that acts in the inner deep of things and that God has placed in corporal nature to put the elements in motion.'[791]

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[786] Lévi, *Clef des grands mystères*, 337.

[787] Lévi, *Clef des grands mystères*, 250.

[788] Lévi, *Clef des grands mystères*, 17.

[789] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:136, 1:200, 2:4.

[790] Among other sources of inspiration, of particular importance must have been the 'spiritus mundus' of Neoplatonic Renaissance magicians like Ficino and Agrippa, and the 'magnetic fluid' from the Mesmerists deriving from it; cf. Wouter J, Hanegraaff, 'How Magic Survived the Disenchantment of the World,' *Religion* 33 (2003): 357-380, there 363-364, 368. None of them did identify this force with Satan, however, as Fabre d'Olivet did. Neither Agrippa *et alia*, as far as I am aware, nor D'Olivet, as we shall note, ascribe to this force the fundamental dialectics between destruction and creation that Lévi attributes to his magical agent. Some Jewish Kabbalists (particularly Luria) had already suggested that both 'good' and 'evil' forces had been present in the Ein Sof. Lévi may also have found inspiration for his dialectic thinking in Hindu or Taoist thought, to which references can be found in his works. Yet the idea to equate this 'mixed emanation' of the divine with Satan is original for Lévi, as far as I am aware. The origin of this idea, as this chapter suggests, will have been his earlier Romantic Satanism, as well as a highly inventive defense strategy by identification and reversion against the traditional attribution of magic as devil worship.

[791] Fabre d'Olivet, *Caïn traduit en vers français et réfuté*, 27, 34-35. D'Olivet's influence on Lévi deserves

Lévi was familiar with D'Olivet's work and cites this theory in *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*. But he goes on to criticize it, and his criticism is very revealing regarding the accents he wants to place. According to the 'great keys of the Kabbalah' and the 'symbolic letters of the Tarot', Lévi argues, the Hebrew word for serpent used in Genesis actually consists of two radicals – one signifying 'the passive receiver and producer of forms,' and the other 'the force that produces mixtures'. Especially the latter element is significant, because for Lévi, the cosmic force that is used by the deity to create the world is not only creative, but also destructive. 'The terrible and just force that eternally destroys the abortions [of life] has been named, by the Hebrews: Samael; by the Orientals, Satan; and by the Latins, Lucifer.'[792] This destructiveness does not make Satan evil. The process of regeneration 'by burning' is the work of the divine, and the antagonism associated with Satan is an essential requirement for the existence of the world as we know it. 'Satan' and 'Michael' have a mutual need of each other, and it is their ongoing and perpetually undecided struggle that constitutes the universe. Lévi here extends upon the myth of origin he had recounted in *Le Testament de la Liberté* and which he did cite again as a 'Gnostic evangel' in *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*. In this myth, he had already depicted Satan as a kind of dialectic necessity, an indispensable counterforce without which the universe in all its multitude of forms cannot exist: 'If the light was not repulsed by shadow, there would have been no visible forms. […] The negation of the angel who, at its birth, refused to become a slave, established the equilibrium of the world, and the movement of the spheres began.'[793]

This idea is greatly expanded in prominence in Lévi's magical works. 'Equilibrium', balance, is over and over again the refrain in *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, and also in its sequel *Histoire de la magie*.[794] Further elucidation of this concept is provided by Lévi's illustrations for *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, particularly the plate he designed for the frontispiece of the second volume: the famous 'he-goat of the Sabbath' who is also the Baphomet of the Templars and at the same time the 'pantheist and magic image of the absolute'.[795] This sinister-looking figure is in fact an intricate symbol for the unity of contraries, inspired, as Lévi readily acknowledges, by the representation from the Tarot that is called 'very frankly and very naïvely: THE DEVIL'.[796] However, he immediately goes on to say that is in reality not at all the devil, but rather the great god Pan, 'the god of our modern schools of philosophy, the god of the theurgists of the Alexandrian school and of today's neoplatonic mystics, the god of Lamartine and of Mr. Victor Cousin, the god of Spinoza and of Plato, the god of the ancient schools of Gnosticism; the Christ himself of the dissident priest'.[797] This would suggest that Lévi's image is a representation of the all-encompassing Absolute of which Satan forms only a part: but elsewhere, Lévi identifies this 'hieroglyphic sign of Baphomet'

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detailed scholarly attention. There are striking similarities, for instance in the description of Gnostic sects (Ibidem, 170), of the scientific nature of Kabbalah (p. 14), and of the historical origin of the devil (p. 169), while Lévi's idea about the 'evil' Satan made real by its invocation seems prefigured in D'Olivet's view that Byron's Lucifer 'n'est qu'une sorte de reflet magique de l'esprit de Caïn, réactionné par une puissance astrale' (p. 169).

[792] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:5; *Histoire de la magie*, 200, 197.

[793] Constant, *Testament de la Liberté*, 4: 'Si la lumière n'était pas repoussée par l'ombre, il n'y aurait pas de formes visibles. […] La négation de l'ange qui, en naissant, refusa d'être esclave, constitua l'équilibre du monde, et le mouvement des sphères commença.'

[794] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:1-66; 1:381: 'L'harmonie est dans l'équilibre, et l'équilibre subsiste par l'analogie des contraires.' Lévi's fundamental dialectic – as opposed to dualistic – tendency is also emphasized by Hanegraaff, 'The Beginnings of Occultist Kabbalah'.

[795] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:vi; figure on frontispice volume 2.

[796] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:225.

[797] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:226-227: 'le dieu de nos écoles de philosophie moderne, le dieu de théurgistes de l'école d'Alexandrie et des mystiques néoplatoniciens de nos jours, le dieu de Lamartine et de M. Victor Cousin, le dieu de Spinosa et de Platon, le dieu des écoles gnostiques primitives; le Christ même du sacerdoce dissident'.

with his cosmic 'universal agency' – which is also called Satan in *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*. Lévi comes very close here to declaring Satan the pantheist godhead; in fact, he does title his Baphomet 'pan-theos' somewhere.[798]

Given this muddle of terms, it is not surprising some readers read dark things in Lévi's works. But although it's perfectly possible to distill passages from Lévi that lead to the conclusion that he was just a stepping stone away from religious Satanism, it would be far to rash to categorize him thus. His sometimes rather careless indulgence in contradictions admitted, the totality of his pages clearly bespeak his belief in a higher deity *above* the pantheist Baphomet, although this deity tends to remain a rather vague, abstract entity. This is only to be expected in a system of Kabbalan magic, of course, because this supreme godhead will correspond with the *Ein Sof* from the Kabbalah, the indescribable, totally transcendent original deity of whom all other manifestations of the divine (like Lévi's Baphomet/Lucifer) are emanations.

In addition, Lévi considered Christianity as one of the dual pillars of his cabbalistic temple of wisdom. The French esoteric, who retained an ambiguous relationship with the church all of his life, thought of himself as a *Catholic* magician.[799] His books were for an important part an apology against those Christian polemicists who indiscriminately considered all magic the work of the Evil One, as for instance his former mentors at the seminary had done. His line of defence in this respect was certainly daring: magic, he claimed, was indeed only possible by the compliance of Satan. But this Satan was subsequently reinterpreted by him in such a way that the meaning of this statement was fundamentally changed. In reality, Lévi maintained, his 'High Magic' was not in opposition to Christianity at all: 'far from it, we want to explain it and fulfil it.'[800]

Just as in his earlier existence as Constant, it must be added, Lévi held very particular ideas about what the essence of Catholicism of Christianity amounted to. 'The Christian-Catholic cult is a form of High Magic organised and regularised by symbolism and hierarchy,' he once wrote to one of his pupils.[801] Lévi's true religion most certainly was that of 'magism', perceived by him as an age-old philosophical and theological system embodying the core of all 'respectable' great religions, including Christianity. This religious system, he claimed united and encompassed religion, philosophy, and the empiricism of science and practical magic. 'Our magic is at the same time a science and a perfect religion, that must not destroy or absorb, but regenerate and direct all opinions and all cults, by reconstituting the circle of the initiates in order to give wise and clear-sighted leaders to the blind masses.'[802] With this

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[798] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:vi.

[799] A well-known posthumous photograph shows a Lévi on his bed with a large cross on his breast (Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, en face 288), and although this obviously does not tell much about his own inclinations, it is true he made confession willingly to a priest before he died. See on this, however, Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 284, and my own subsequent remarks. Lévi's genuine attitude towards institutional Roman-Catholicism is perhaps better captured by a passage from a letter he wrote in 1870, after the First Vatican Council had declared the infallibility of the papacy: 'Maintenant je suis une voix de l'avenir et j'ai fait mon devoir en sortant de la Babylone condamnée à l'apostasie. Maintenant je suis du côté de Jésus-Christ et des apôtres! je suis absous! je suis réhabilité! je suis libre! hosannah!' (quoted in ibidem, 260).

[800] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:105: 'loin de là, nous voulons l'expliquer et l'accomplir.' Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 183n, recounts in an amusing anecdote how Lévi submitted his magical works to the 'officialité de Paris' and received as response: 'Nous n'approuvons ni ne désapprouvons; vos livres ne sont ni hérétiques ni impies; ils sont extravagans.' Unfortunately, Chacornac fails to provide a source reference for this story.

[801] Letter to his pupil Moutant, cited without date in Papus, *La Caballe: Tradition secrète de l'Occident* ([Paris]: Bibliothèque Chacornac, 1903), 49: 'le culte chrétien-catholique est la haute magie organisée et regularisée par le symbolisme et la hiérarchie.' See also Lévi's utterances cited in McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi*, 146.

[802] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:48-49: 'Notre magie est à la fois une science et une religion

idea, Lévi continued a long tradition of attempts to determine the hidden symbolic key behind or inside all religions, a project dating back to at least the eighteenth century. Because he believed he had discovered the key to what Christianity and its symbolism *really* was about, one suspects, he saw no bone in calling himself Catholic.[803]
Even if we put aside the question of his Christianity, however, Lévi would still have empathically denied that his practise of magic involved a veneration of the 'blind agency' that he sometimes identified as Satan. Magic, at least the good, 'white' magic Lévi propagated, was nothing else than the subduing of this Luciferian 'agency of magic' by the magician, who like the woman of biblical prophecy must put his foot on the head of the serpent by utilizing his will and intelligence.[804] Lévi here echoes a line of apology that can be found in some books of magic from the medieval and early modern period: the magician is actually subduing the spirits, not the other way around (see chapter 1). It is instructive, however, to point out the salient differences between these earlier practices and those propagated by Lévi. While the medieval and early modern necromancer claimed to be able to control the demons by enlisting the aid of the divine, be it by fasting, by uttering the divine names, or by using the power of the Host, Lévi's magician dominates the 'agency of magic' solely by the power of his own will and intelligence. Rituals, even the most colourful ones, are only a means to concentrate the will of the magician; consequently, the ancient mysteries of magic were nothing but a form of science. This is what makes Lévi's 'magism' so eminently modern, notwithstanding all the 'Christian' dogmas and 'ancient' rituals he scavenged from old books or constructed himself.[805] That does not change the fact, however, that he presented his relation to the 'cosmic force' of Lucifer as one of domination rather than veneration.

Meanwhile, Lévi did not deny the existence of a kind of magic that was truly evil and 'Satanist' in the traditional sense of the word. Time and again, he contrasts his 'white church' of 'High Magic' with this 'black church' of 'Negromancers' and 'Goetian magicians' (sic). His characterization of this black magic is not devoid, it must be said, of ambiguity and confusion of terms. It seems that there are three not mutually exclusive ways in which one can fall into this practice. Firstly, if the magician does not succeed in retaining mastery over the vital force, he is mastered by it, leading to sensual inebriety, dementia, and destruction.[806] This is the case with both spiritist mediums and the adepts of black magic. Therefore Lévi can write that 'the devil gives himself to the magician and the sorcerer gives himself to the devil'.[807] Second, all magic done for evil purposes is by definition black magic.[808] Because it is morally neutral, 'indifferent in itself in some way', the 'agency of magic', though created for good, can be made to serve for evil.[809] And thirdly, and most interestingly, there are those

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absolue, qui doit, non pas détruire et absorber toutes les opinions et tous les cultes, mais les régénérer et les diriger, en reconstituant le cercle des initiés, et en donnant ainsi aux masse aveugles des conducteurs sages et clair-voyants!'

[803] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:242-243. Lévi's attitude is exemplified by a passage in *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:56, where he attests that it is a 'ridiculous contradiction' to say one is a Catholic but not a Roman-Catholic: catholic means universal, and Rome is in the universe!

[804] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:140, 200.

[805] Cf. McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi*, 150; Hutton, *Triumph of The Moon*, 82.

[806] Lévi, *Histoire de la magie*, 197.

[807] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:288-292; see also 1:114: 'le diable se donne au magicien et le sorcier se donne au diable'. This is also what caused the fall of Adam: Éliphas Lévi, *Histoire de la magie, avec une exposition claire et précise de ses procédés, de ses rites et de ses mystères* (Paris: Germer Ballière, 1860), 196.

[808] See in particular Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:306: 'LE DIABLE EN MAGIE NOIRE, C'EST LE GRAND AGENT MAGIQUE EMPLOYÉ POUR LE MAL PAR UNE VOLONTÉ PERVERSE.'

[809] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:200; *Histoire de la magie*, 200-201.

who explicitly invoke the 'impossible idol' of Satan in his non-existent shape of god of evil.[810] This implies, Lévi argues in a nice under-the-belt sting against conservative Roman-Catholicism, that they 'belong to the religion that admits a devil that is capable of creating and becoming a rival of God'.[811] Because in magical operations the will of the practitioner ensures the impact of the ritual, as we have seen, the invocation of the devil can make this 'pseudo-god' real for the invocator.[812] Thus, both the 'black' magicians who seek to invoke the devil ánd the Christian polemicists who affirm his existence are involved in magic that *creates* the Evil One as a reality.[813]

Regarding the 'criminal and insane assemblies' of the worshippers of this diabolic devil, Lévi repeats a good deal of the allegations that centuries of attribution had brought into circulation. He also added to the repertoire himself, and some of his inventions would enjoy a tenacious afterlife in folklore and pseudoscience. The interpretation of the 'sign of the horn' as symbol for Satan, for instance, is first found in Éliphas Lévi, as is the idea of the 'inverted' pentagram as a diabolic emblem: the two upward points, he claimed, signified the horns of the goat thrusting against heaven, while the 'white' pentagram with two points down was a symbol for Christ.[814] (With considerable sang-froid, Lévi did not hesitate to put this invention to polemic use: it was impossible, he asserted, that the Baphomet that was depicted in his book was 'one of the fabulous images of Satan', for the pentagram on his forehead was pointing upward![815] In fact, this was a piece of double daring, for the portrait of Baphomet in *Dogme et rituel* had been the product of Lévi's own creativity as well.)

This dual tradition of white and black magic was not a matter of mere theory for Lévi. A distant echo of Sand's *Consuelo*, he maintained that his religion of Magic had always had its adepts in secret, organised in invisible philanthropic societies. This was the background of the witches' Sabbath, which came into being when the various mystery cults of paganism were driven underground by Christian persecution and subsequently amalgamated into one universal orthodoxy of magic (resembling somehow, one supposes, the great magical synthesis by Lévi himself). 'In this manner, the mysteries of Isis, of the Eulisian Ceres, and of Bacchus united themselves to those of the good goddess and ancient druidism,' Lévi recounted.[816] At the same time, however, Lévi also recognized the continuing reality of a counter conspiracy of black magic. Although no more than a 'gathering of evil-doers exploiting idiots and fools', this malevolent conspiracy had its roots in Antiquity as well, and constituted a degeneration of the real Sabbath.[817] In a remark he did not elucidate, Lévi disclosed that this double line of hidden magic activity was not a thing of the past: 'even today, there still exist secret and nocturnal assemblies where the rites of the old world were and are practiced, and of those assemblies, some have a religious nature and a social purpose, while the others consist of conspiracies and orgies.'[818]

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[810] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:242-243.

[811] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:243.

[812] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:306: 'Lorsqu'on appelle le diable avec les cérémonies voulues, le diable vient et on le voit.'

[813] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:252-253.

[814] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:98-99. For older uses of the 'sign of the horn' as an initial gesture devoid of diabolical implications see Maurice Bessy, *A Pictorial History of Magic and the Supernatural*, trans. Margaret Crosland and Allan Daventry (London: Spring Books, 1964), 202, plates 649-650. The pentagram, upwards or downwards, is an exceedingly ancient symbol used at least since Sumerian times; it also had an important place in Pythagorean numerology.

[815] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:230.

[816] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:235: 'Ainsi, les mystères d'Isis, de Cérès Eleusine, de Bacchus, se réunirent à ceux de la bonne déesse et du druidisme primitive'

[817] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:239: 'assemblée de malfaiteurs qui exploitaient des idiots et des fous'.

[818] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:235: '[Il] existe même encore des assemblées secrètes et nocturnes

How did Éliphas Lévi the Magician relate to Alphonse Constant the Romantic Satanist? This question, which is of crucial importance for our study, can be answered in two ways: by emphasizing the continuity between the two personae of French esotericism, or by underlining the differences between them. Starting with the continuity between Constant and his subsequent alter ego, it is evident that underneath the colourful varnish of magical lore and esoteric nomenclature, much of Lévi's older ideas remained. This is especially clear in his utterances regarding the divinity. *Dogme et rituel* and its sequels retain essentially the same panentheist and (for want of a better word) *humanist* god as his pre-magical works. In the first pages of *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, Lévi comments on the 'esoteric' use of traditional theological terms and the 'communication of idioms' that his imagism allows. 'Which also brings about that one can attribute to God the sufferings of man and to man the glories of God. In one word, the *communication of idioms* is the solidarity of divine and human nature in Jesus Christ; a solidarity in which name it is possible to say that God is man and that man is God.'[819] This is, it must be noted, a perfectly 'orthodox' idea. But in the context of the totality of Lévi's work, one gets the suspicion that the notion here expressed is less than traditional. The Romantic notion of the identity of god and man can be seen in more naked form in *La Clef des grands mystères*, where it appears without the camouflage of Roman-Catholic Christology:

> Man is the form assumed by divine thought, and God is the ideal synthesis of human thought.
>
> Thus the Word of God is the revelator of man, and the Word of man is the revelator of God.
>
> Man is the God of the world, and God is the heavenly man.[820]

This understanding of the deity also underlies Lévi's theory about magic. Here ideas return that are at least affiliated with his earlier beliefs about poetry and vision. For Lévi, as we have seen, magic depended essentially on the power of will and intelligence. Primarily and specifically, this means asserting mastery over oneself – for the vitalizing force that sustains the universe is also the vitalizing force within man himself. 'Before anything else, the Great Work is the creation of man by himself, that is to say: the full and complete conquest he makes of his faculties and his future; it is above all the perfect emancipation of his will, which assures him the total dominance over the Azoth and the domain of Magnetism, that is to say: full power over the universal agency of magic'[821] Yet it is not will and intelligence alone that allows us to do so, according to Lévi.

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où l'on a pratiqué et où l'on pratique des rites de l'ancien monde, et de ces assemblées, les unes ont un caractère religieux et un but social, les autres sont des conjurations et des orgies.' Lévi goes on to describe the ceremonies to invoke the devil 'pour qu'on les connaisse, qu'on les juge, et qu'on se préserve à jamais de sembables aberrations' (ibidem, 1:307), but the ritual he describes is clearly a pastiche, requiring among other things the skull of a patricide, a bat drowned in blood, the head of a black cat fed with human flesh for five days, and the horns of a he-goat with which a girl has copulated (*Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:246).

[819] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:8-9.

[820] Lévi, *Clef des grands mystères*, 17: 'L'homme, c'est la forme de la pensée divine, et Dieu c'est la synthèse idéalisée de la pensée humaine.
Ainsi le Verbe de Dieu est le révélateur de l'homme, et le Verbe de l'homme est le révélateur de Dieu.
L'homme est le Dieu du monde, et Dieu est l'homme du ciel.'
Compare for similar Romantic reinterpretations of Christ and Christian dogma: Bénichou, *Temps des prophètes*, 424.

[821] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:267: 'Le grand œuvre, c'est, avant toute chose, la création de l'homme par lui-même, c'est-à-dire la conquête pleine et entière qu'il fait de ses facultés et de son avenir; c'est surtout l'émancipation parfaite de sa volonté, qui lui assure l'empire universel de l'Azoth et le domaine de la Magnésie, c'est-à-dire un plein pouvoir sur l'agent magique universel.' Lévi here adapts classic notions about the relation between microcosmos and macrocosmos from Neoplatonism and hermeticism and notions about wthe power of will he may have picked up these notions with the later Mesmerists. Another unexpected source

> Will and intelligence have as their auxiliary and instrument a faculty not sufficiently known, the power of which belongs exclusively to the domain of magic: I intend the imagination, which the Kabbalists call the *diaphanous* or the *translucent*.
> The imagination, in fact, is like the eye of the soul: it is in her that all forms make themselves visible and retain themselves, and it is through her that we see the reflections of the invisible world. She is the mirror of vision and the device of magic: it is through her that we heal diseases, that we influence the seasons, that we ward of death from the living and that we resuscitate the dead, because it is she who exalts our will and gives it grip on the universal agency.[822]

We see a familiar term return here, and we begin to understand how Levi's magic is linked to Romantic notions regarding the creative power of the imaginative artist in particular and of mankind in general. This is not to say that Lévi's ideas about imagination and will are a direct import from Romanticism. It is as probable that they derive partly from common, older sources – Paracelsus especially comes to mind, and he is indeed mentioned by Lévi on the subsequent pages.[823] But there is a clear affinity of concepts here that suggests why the transition from Romantic poet to modern magician might not have been such a radical one for Lévi. The magician is basically a Romantic poet in a new, slightly more exotic guise. The parallel might indeed not be too far-fetched. As the 'universal agency' of magic is the same 'natural and divine agency' (a.k.a. Lucifer, a.k.a. Baphomet, etc.) that serves as the 'intermediary force' by which the deity creates and regenerates the world, the magician, by the application of his imagination, in fact assumes the role of the creator.[824] By logically combining the things Lévi wrote (a dubious exercise, I admit), one suspects that the magician could even, by expressing his 'Word', create or give form to the deity. It is not surprising, in this light, that Lévi says elsewhere that the magician who takes a 'sovereign empire' over his 'inner phosphor' may gain his own immortality.[825] Blake would have agreed.

While we can discern a clear continuity here between Constant and Lévi, on another fundamental point the new apostle of magic plainly parted ways with his former self. We have already alluded to the unmistakably different political and ideological colour of Lévi's work on magic. One of the places where this becomes visible, is, significantly, at the point where he discusses poetry in *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*.[826] Being a poet is creating, Lévi writes; the deity himself was a poet when he created the world. But being a poet does not mean propounding falsehoods or dreams. 'The poetry that does not accept the world as God has made it and seeks to invent another one is nothing but the delirium of spirits of darkness: it is this poetry that loves mystery and denies the progressions of the human intelligence.'[827] This is the poetry of anarchism, the 'personification of idealism without authority', 'the impotent rage of Prometheus'. The 'poetry submitted to order', meanwhile,

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may have been his old friend Alphonse Esquiros, who had already underlined the importance of will in magic in his 1837 novel *Le Magicien*, 184: 'Il faut vouloir. La volonté est une main intérieure qui remue tout: *fiat lux*!' Compare Lévi's celebrated dictum from *Dogme et rituel*, 2:32: 'Il faut SAVOIR pour OSER. Il faut OSER pour VOULOIR. Il faut VOULOIR pour avoir l'empire. Et pour régner, il faut SE TAIRE.' Although Lévi dismissed *Le Magicien*, with some reason, as 'un livre de haute fantaisie' in *Histoire de la magie*, 497, it seems this did prevent him from drawing inspiration from it. Interestingly enough, Esquiros' book already drew as conclusion from this premise that the ultimate aim of the magician is to become god; see *Le Magicien*, 71, 132-133.

[822] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:124.

[823] On Romanticism and Will, compare Berlin, *Roots of Romanticism*, 119. Another field of influence that should be explored is that of contemporary philosophy, particularly the idealism of Hegel, Schopenhauer, and the earlier German *Naturphilosophe*.

[824] Lévi, *Histoire de la magie*, 18, 196.

[825] Lévi, *Histoire de la magie*, 196-197.

[826] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:53-55.

[827] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:54-55.

does not transcend the bounds of authority and reason, and 'will march sometimes in front of science, sometimes in her traces, but always near to her'.[828]
This is a different melody than we have encountered with the early Constant, and one that would have repulsed Blake, Shelley, and Byron. At the same time, we must not exaggerate or misunderstand this change. Lévi had not become a reactionary in the original sense of the word. The pages of his magical works are replete with assertions that suggest a continuing presence of many of the revolutionary and Romantic ideas of the old Constant: allusions to liberty and 'fierce and audacious' intelligence, anticlerical utterances against the 'Pharisees of all the synagogues and all the churches', assertions of the freedom of scientific enquiry, over and against the persecuting church of the past ('we no longer live, thanks to God, in the time of the inquisition and the stake'), reappearances of messianic or millenialist concepts.[829]
The context and meaning of these terms, however, has changed. 'Liberty', for instance, can now be called 'the guardian of duty'; and Lucifer's conquest of Liberty will only bear fruit when he will use it 'to submit himself to the eternal order' out of 'voluntary obedience'.[830]
Lévi still prophecies the approach of a millennial era of harmony, but now this harmony consists of the embrace of liberty and authority (as well as science and religion), and is stripped of its communist implications.[831]
Lévi's new attitude becomes very clear in his appraisal of the French Revolution, an unfailing litmus test for ideological positions during the nineteenth century. Yes, he declares in *Dogme et rituel*, the Revolution *was* a 'divine experience': but *only* in the sense that it was a necessary excess leading to a new equilibrium, a 'debauch of the prodigal son whose unique future is a definitive return and a solemn feast in the house of the father'.[832] His new *pris de position* can be summarized by the little catechism he published in *La Clef des grands mystères*:

> Q: What is good?
> R: Order.
> Q: What is evil?
> R: Disorder.
> Q: What pleasure is permitted?
> R: The enjoyment of order.[833]

What did prompt this conspicuous change in attitude? Biographers have suggested that the elopement of his wife had much to do with the emergence of the new Constant.[834] This is perfectly feasible: Lévi would not have been the only person whose wider outlook on life was fundamentally changed after a personal setback in his intimate life. One can imagine that the experience may have sorely diminished his enthusiasm for the feminist messianism propagated by Tristan and his own earlier publications. In the books he wrote as Éliphas Lévi, one sees indeed a very different attitude towards women and love. The harmful

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[828] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:55; compare 1:52: 'Tout ce qui s'accomplit hors de l'autorité, s'accomplit hors de la nature, qui est la loi positive de l'autorité éternelle.'
[829] Liberty and intelligence: among other places, *Clef des grands mystères*, 23, 66 (compare ibidem, 22 ; 'La loi est une épreuve de courage.'); anticlericalism: Clef, 22; science: *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:62 ('Nous ne sommes pas, grâce à Dieu, au temps des inquisiteurs et des bûchers […].'); compare ibidem, 2:242; messianism: *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:56; millenialism: *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:2, *Clef des grands mystères*, 20-21, 23, where Constant's earlier ideas of the coming Age of the Holy Ghost and the Mother return practically intact.
[830] Lévi, *Clef des grands mystères*, 24.
[831] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:2; Clef, 23-25.
[832] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:20: 'débauche de l'enfant prodigue qui avait pour unique avenir un retour décisif et une fête solennelle dans la maison du père du famille.'
[833] Lévi, *Clef des grands mystères*, 109.
[834] Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 128, 141; McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi*, 100.

surrender of Adam to the 'astral light', for instance, is depicted in terms of 'erotic drunkenness'; physical love is described as 'the most perverse of all fatal passions' and the 'anarchist par excellence'; and at the end of Dogme *et rituel de la haute magie*, Lévi gives some rather amusing courtship tips that boil down to the fact that you have to play the devil or the indifferent to conquer the heart of woman.[835] Still, I do not think that it was his unhappy marital experience that occasioned Constant/Levi's ideological paradigm shift. Noémi left him in the second half of 1853, and *Dogme et rituel* would start to roll from the printing press in the beginning of 1854; moreover, his first biographer explicitly attests that Lévi was already working on the book when his wife walked out on him. In my opinion, we have to trace Lévi's change of attitude to *political* developments: more in particular the political developments connected to the revolution of 1848 and the years that immediately followed it.

The revolution of 1848 had known two stages in France. In February, a Parisian uprising of bourgeoisie and working classes had led to the flight of the French king and the establishment of a provisional government. After attempts to provide universal employment were abandoned, the Paris working classes took the streets again during the June Days, but this revolt was ruthlessly smashed by government troops. The facts that we can glean from his biographers clearly indicate Lévi's enthusiasm for the initial phase of the revolution. In February 1848, Constant was just six months out of prison after being condemned for publishing a pamphlet entitled *La Voix de la Famine* ('The Voice of Faime'), in which he had drawn attention to the appalling living conditions of the proletariat.[836] Together with his editor Gallois and his boyhood friend Alphonse Esquiros (the author of *Le Magicien*), he launched a political club with a predominantly worker following. Furthermore, he attempted to present himself as a candidate for parliament with a program 'of the most radical socialism', demanding an end to economic exploitation, complete freedom of thought, and liberty for 'religion, love, and other legitimate enticements'.[837] The bloody events of the June Days seem to have ended all this. It appears that Constant narrowly escaped death himself: government troops apprehended a wine merchant under the impression that they were dealing with the socialist agitator, and summarily executed him on the corner of a street.[838]

Although this story, when true, implies that the authorities thought the future magician to be involved in the workers' insurrection, this impression does not seem to have been correct. Constant, who had always condemned violent action, seems to have been horrified with the development of things. It is probable that his political reorientation dates back to these events. We do not have a direct statement from Constant to prove this, but a strong clue can be found in a poem he published in the *Dictionnaire de littérature chrétienne* ('Dictionary of Christian Literature') from 1851. This publication, in fact, would be the last that he published

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[835] Lévi, *Histoire de la magie*, 196; Clef, 281 ('L'amour physique est la plus perverse de toutes les passions fatales. C'est l'anarchiste par excellence; il ne connaît ni lois, ni devoirs, ni vérité, ni justice. […] Vaincre l'amour, c'est triompher de la nature tout entière.'); *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 2:296-303. Compare also *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:194: 'Celui-là dispose de l'amour des autres qui es maître de le sien. Voulez-vous posséder, ne vous donnez pas.' These utterances are counterbalanced by less misogynist statements, for instance *Clef des grands mystères*, 19-20 ('La femme est le sourire du Créateur content de lui-même' et ff.); in contrast with *Dogme et rituel*, 1:194, see also *Clef des grands mystères*, 24-25.

[836] Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 100-106.

[837] Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 113-117. Together with his wife, Constant was also active in a feminist political association during this period, 'Le club des Femmes'. His attempts to become a political candidate failed, in contrast to those of his friend Esquiros, who was elected to the National Assembly in May 1849. Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 116, mentions a bit mysteriously that 'á partir de cette époque, l'amitié qui unissait A. Constant et A. Esquiros se rompit'; it seems probable that this was due to Constant's growing conservatism and especially his bonapartism; Esquiros remained a Radical and departed in exile after Louis Napoleon's 1851 coupe.

[838] Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 117. Chacornac's source for this story, it should be noted, is an article by Jules Claretie in *L'Evénement* that only appeared on 26 April 1866.

under his own name. It had been commissioned by the ultra-catholic editor Jacques Paul Migne, the famed publisher of patristic and theological works – a fact that may not be deemed without significance itself. Typically, Constant profited from the occasion to include a copious amount of literary texts from his own hand as anonymous examples of Christian literature. One of these examples was a poem with the title 'La chute de Lucifer' ('The Fall of Lucifer'), in which he recounted how God offered his beautiful daughter Liberty as a bride to his angels. Lucifer at once abducts here, but when the latter has taken her down to his infernal residence, he discovers that she has died. The enraged angel proceeds to promenade her corpse over the earth, where the splendour of even her dead body incites the nations to revolution. The political application of the brief poem is especially made clear by a few lines from the last strophe:

> O People, o Lucifer! Your arm is powerless,
> Led astray by hate and defiled by blood!
> Your bride shall live when, laying down your arms,
> You will feel tears welling up in your softened eyes.
> Your bride shall live when, free in every place,
> You will be great enough to submit yourself to God!
>
> (O peuple, ô Lucifer! ton bras est impuissant,
> Egaré par la haine et souillé dans la sang!
> Ton épouse vivra, quand, déposant tes armes,
> Dans tes yeux attendris tu sentiras des larmes ;
> Ton épouse vivra lorsque, libre en tout lieux,
> Tu seras assez grand pour te soumettre à Dieu')[839]

In appropriate mythological garb, this poem signals Constant's growing attachment to order, a word that would appear ever more frequently in his subsequent works on magic, and which, incidentally, had also been the rallying cry of the conservative opposition during the events of 1848. Lévi's ardent admiration for both Napoleons, of whom his first magic manual contains some rather peculiar passages of panegyric, fits perfectly into this development.[840] In *Doctrines religieuses et sociales*, Constant had already praised Napoleon I, who as a tragic historic character had exerted a great attraction on many of the Romantics.[841] But there he had hailed the Corsican as a 'Revolutionary Messiah'; now he lauded both Napoleons as messianic saviours because they had established a perfect balance between liberty and authority, 'two contraries that are basically the same thing, because one cannot exist without the other'.[842] This notion was less absurd than it may seem, because Louis Napoleon, for all his authoritarianism, had also espoused social-utopist and populist ideas, favouring direct democracy by plebiscite. Nor was Constant exceptional in his preferences: after Louis Napoleon had declared himself emperor, ninety percent of the French electorate expressed its approval of the new monarchy.[843]

Lévi's redefinition of Satan, which at first glance may seem a matter of obscure theological and esoteric theory, is in fact quite consistent with this political background. As a vehicle for

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[839] Alphonse Constant, *Dictionnaire de littérature chrétienne* (Paris: Migne, 1851), 557-558.

[840] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:8, 20-21, 25-29.

[841] Alphonse Constant, *Doctrines religieuses et sociales* (Paris: Aug. Le Gallois, 1841), 76: 'Messie révolutionnaire'.

[842] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:22.

[843] In later life, Lévi apparently grew more critical of Napoleon III. Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 165-168, mentions a satirical song produced by him in which he compared the French emperor to Caligula. This gained him his last term in prison, but he was soon released, according to Chacornac, after he send Napoleon a crafty retraction in verse. Chacornac does not date this episode, but a reference in Lévi's poem to Felice Orsini makes 1858 the date non ante quem. A more detailed study of Lévi's ideological and political development in this period is greatly desired.

propagating radical change, Lévi now had no need for Satan anymore, and his new Lucifer is in essence a symbol of status quo. Light and darkness, liberty and authority, spirit and matter, destruction and creation are all necessary constituents of the vitalizing universal force: they must balance, not replace each other. This puts Levi's Baphomet in contrast to the redeemed Lucifer of earlier French Romantic Satanism, out of whom he had grown, and who still made occasional appearances in *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* and its sequels, uneasily combined with the French magician's new creation. The old Lucifer had been a temporary counterforce, antagonistic but emancipatory, which was to be reunited with the godhead into an ideal world. In Lévi's new concept of Satan, this Lucifer was so to say only one arm of Baphomet: and to redeem the latter from his internal antagonism would cause the universe to stand still. Despite the fact that it preserved characteristics of the Romantic Satan – his pantheist nature, his association with intelligence (symbolized by the torch on his head) and with the material and the sexual (symbolized by the female breasts and the caducean in his lap) – this image of Satan expressed a wholly different ideological agenda.
That this new ideological agenda was not simply a form of Catholic Reactionism is indicated by the distinctly unchristian ethos that sometimes shimmers through the pages of *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*. Prompted by his Bonapartism and the emphasis he laid on will-power, the French master of magic formulated some remarkable ethical ideas, especially in his laudations for the Napoleons. 'The man who does not succeed is always wrong,' Lévi proclaimed in a 'preliminary discourse' he added to the second edition of *Dogme et rituel*, 'be it in literature, be it in morals, be it in politics. […] And if we ascend into the eternal domain of dogma, two spirits could be found there once upon time, each of them wanting divinity for himself alone: one of them succeeded, and it is he who is God; the other one failed, and became the demon!'[844] In Lévi's publications, to be sure, these serpentine whispers were drowned in choirs singing the praise of agape, duty, and devotion. But we will see this insinuating thread picked up at a later point.

Lévi's shadow would loom large over Western occultism and esotericism. This was not due, it must be pointed out, to the institutional legacy he left behind. Although the 'professor of magic' took on some (paying) pupils whom he instructed personally (mainly by custom-made correspondence courses), he never instituted an organised body of adherents to propagate his system of 'magism'. Perhaps he considered the Roman-Catholic Church as the proper place to participate in the rituals of his universal religion. Rather, his fame among later occultists would be ensured by his books. Their influence is clearly discernible, for instance, in the doctrines of the Theosophical Society, one of the most important organisations within the spectrum of alternative religiosity in the later nineteenth century. The dominant personality in the pioneering years of this esoteric movement was without doubt Madame H. P. Blavatsky (1831-1891), a woman of Russian descent who after much international wandering had settled down in New York to establish a new, 'universal' religion.[845] Although she claimed to owe her enlightenment to mysterious Tibetan Masters, the impact of Éliphas Lévi upon her work is unmistakable.[846] This becomes especially

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[844] Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:7: 'L'homme qui ne réussit pas a toujours tort, soit en littérature, soit en morale, soit en politique. […] Et s'il faut remonter plus haut jusque dans le domaine éternel du dogme, deux esprits se trouvèrent autrefois, chacun desquels voulait la divinité pour lui seul: l'un réussit, et c'est lui qui est Dieu; l'autre échoua, et devint le démon!'
[845] On the Theosophical Society and Blavatsky, see Godwin, *Theosophical Enlightenment*, 280-367; Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1:78-87.
[846] Blavatsky shared Lévi's emphasis on Will and his general pantheistic cosmic model (cf. H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*, 2 vols., (Pasadena, Ca.: Theosophical University Press, 1972), 1:57), and also adopted from the French magician the notion that the entities appearing in spiritualist séances were not the deceased themselves, but their astral bodies – much to the

apparent in her views on Satan. In her first major work, *Isis Unveiled* of 1877, a long chapter entitled 'The Devil Myth' is dedicated to the mythological fallen angel. After disposing of the Christian Satan as the 'prop and mainstay of sacerdotism', she goes on to paraphrase Lévi on the real nature of the devil as 'an antagonistic blind force – the dark side of nature', a sort of primal energy 'not *malum in se*, but only the Shadow of Light, so to say.'[847] This line of thinking is continued in even more explicit Lévian terms in *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky's second book of esoteric teachings. Supposing a source of evil outside the all-encompassing divinity is an error, she argues here; 'the first Karmic effect of abandoning a philosophical and logical Pantheism'.[848] However, 'as an 'adversary', the opposing Power required by the equilibrium and harmony of things in Nature – like Shadow to throw off still brighter the Light, like Night to bring into greater *relief* the Day, and like cold to make one appreciate the more the comfort of heat – SATAN has ever existed.'[849] Blavatsky showed herself keenly aware of the intricacies of Lévi's concept, for although the latter's 'astral light' emanates from the absolute godhead, she maintains, it cannot be equated with the 'Ain-Soph' or 'Father-Æther'. As a 'Spirit of the earth', its soul is divine, but its body belongs to a lower, 'infernal' plane, forming so to speak a 'negative' reflection of the divinity in the dark waters of matter – 'Demon est Deus Inversus'.[850]

Theosophy also adopted the notion of Lucifer as bringer of light that had already made its hesitant appearance with the Romantic Satanists and had been prominently expounded on the pages of Lévi's earlier and later work. In Blavatsky's interpretation of Genesis, the myth of Lucifer and the Fallen Angels really signified the 'hypostasizing' of divine beings into the material world to bring rationality and knowledge and thus make humans human.[851] Against this background, it becomes clear why one of the earliest Theosophical periodicals carried *Lucifer* as its title. Its front page depicted the Morning Angel as a semi-nude boy holding aloft the shining star of enlightenment: a short notice explained that Lucifer was 'no profane or satanic title' but 'the name of the pure, pale herald of daylight'.[852]

For Blavatsky and many of her fellow-Theosophists, the real evil was not Satan, but the hated 'P.G.', the Personal God of monotheism. Or rather: the idea of the Personal God, as this godhead itself had no base in reality. Here Blavatsky diverged from Lévi the Christian magician, who might possibly have agreed with the gist of her ideas, given his strong panentheism, but never would have expressed himself in such crassly antagonistic terms on the doctrines of the 'Catholic religion'. Blavatsky's utterances, however, were perfectly in tune with the older anti-Christian tendencies current among Romantic Satanists like Shelley and Hugo. Volume II of *Isis Unveiled* already had been 'in particular directed against theological Christianity, the chief opponent of free thought', although it contained 'not one word against the pure teachings of Jesus'.[853] In *The Secret Doctrine*, the roles of Satan and 'the so-called Creator' were totally reversed. 'Who the great 'Deceiver' really is, one can ascertain by searching for him *with open eyes* and an unprejudiced mind, in every old cosmogony and Scripture. It is the anthropomorphised *Demiurge*, the Creator of Heaven and

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indignation of the spiritualists, who rightly concluded this implied that they were only communicating with the spiritual corpses of the departed. ('Nous évoquons les souvenirs qu'ils ont laissés dans la lumière astrale', Lévi had written about the 'dead' of spiritism; *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*, 1:289. Regarding Lévi's influence on Blavatsky, see also Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1:85n.

[847] Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, 2:472-528; quote on 2:480. See also in this publication 1:138.

[848] H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*. 2 vols. (London: The Theosophical Society Publishing Company, 1888), 1:412.

[849] Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, 1:411.

[850] Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, 1:423-424.

[851] Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, 2:275.

[852] Osterkamp, *Lucifer*, 225-226, 230.

[853] Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, 2:iv.

Earth, when separated from the collective Hosts of his fellow-Creators, whom, so to speak, he represents and synthesizes. […] Once upon a time, a philosophical symbol left to perverse human fancy; afterwards fashioned into a fiendish, deceiving, cunning, and jealous God.'[854]

Eventually, Blavatsky would claim to have found the 'philosophical and logical Pantheism' she was looking for in the religions of the East. Theosophical doctrine was gradually permeated with complicated Indian cosmogonies, and in 1878, Blavatsky *cum suis* sailed off the India to resettle in Adyar. This shift to the East, both spiritual and physical, was not greeted with enthusiasm by all members of the Theosophical Society. Prominent amongst the opponents of Easternization was Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), head of the German branch of the Society and editor of a German theosophical periodical that was called *Luzifer* as well (after 1903, it merged with the Vienna theosophical bulletin and received the even more appropriate name *Lucifer Gnosis*).[855] In contrast with the autodidact Blavatsky, Steiner held a doctorate in philosophy, and he used the accompanying verbosity to emphasize the intrinsic value of the Western esoteric and spiritual legacy. When the Adyar leadership put forward a young Indian boy named Jiddhu Krishnamurti as the coming Great World Teacher, Steiner initiated a schism in the Theosophical ranks and founded a rival organisation, which he dubbed the Anthroposophical Society.[856]
The European orientation of the Anthroposophical Society manifested itself in a renewed affinity with Christ and Christianity, although in a highly specific anthroposophist framework.[857] Satan, that other central mythological figure of Christianity, was also not forgotten. In the cosmology of Steiner, two different tendencies manifest themselves: that of Lucifer, which tends to spiritual and intellectual knowledge, and that of Ahriman, which represents the material, the physical, the mechanical, and even the financial.[858] (Steiner here adopted the Manichean view on Ahriman as presiding in matter, which had not been the case in original Zoroastrianism. Earlier, he had contrasted the 'Lucifer-Principle' with a more or less materialistic 'Jehovah-Principle'.)[859] None of these two tendencies are evil in themselves, but when unchecked, one of them may gain undue prominence and cause a disastrous imbalance. The balancing force that is between these two principles and also incorporates them is the 'Christ Being', who embodies the divine principle of altruism and sacrifice. It is not hard to see that the Luciferian and Ahrimanic principles in Steiner's cosmology correspond to the nineteenth-century Satan in two of its classic roles, that of patron angel of the human pursuit of knowledge, and of metaphorical representation of the material, the corporal, and the sexual. In addition, both principles were perceived by Steiner to have objective reality, both within the psyche of man, in the world outside him, and in the spiritual sphere. With a somewhat disturbing fondness for typologies, Steiner saw his ruling principles also represented in the various nations of the globe. Thus, the Eastern nations were

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[854] Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, 1:413.
[855] Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1:128-129, 344. There is some confusion about the nomenclature of this periodical: for an example of a cover, see http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5d/Lucifer-gnosis-1904.jpg, accessed 28 May 2012.
[856] Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1:138-181.
[857] Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1:781-830.
[858] On Satan with Steiner, see Osterkamp, *Lucifer*, 229-234; Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1:833-834. Steiner's ideas on Lucifer had antecedents in earlier theosophy: C. G. Harrison, *Das Transcedentale Weltenall: Sechs Vorträge über Geheimwissen, Theosophie und den katholische Glauben, gehalten vor der 'Berean Society'*, trans. Carl Graf zu Leiningen-Billigheim (1897; reprint, Stuttgart: Engel & Seefels, 1990), 115-119, already stated that Lucifer most certainly was 'der Lichtträger' to whom mankind owed 'die Fähigkeit intellektueller Unterscheidung oder der Erkenntniss von Gut oder Böse', but that he could also, because of his limited appearance as intellectuality, sometimes work *against* this final revelation of the godhead of love.
[859] Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1:834. Steiner first thought to name his antagonistic principle Sorat, whom he planned to place in opposition to the 'Christ-Lamb' as representative of 'black magic'.

predominantly Luciferian, while Western Europeans and Americans were more Ahrimanically inclined. Central Europe and Germany occupied a kind of middle ground in this scheme, in accordance with the special mission and position Steiner reserved for these territories.[860]

Steiner's cosmic hierarchy was given visible outlines by the huge wooden sculpture group in the Dornach cultic centre that Steiner started to craft in 1914 with the help of the sculptor Edith Maryon.[861] Its most important component is a human figure that rises up from the ground with one arm stretched downwards and the other raised to the sky, the hands clenched as if holding on to something. Steiner had originally intended this to be a depiction of the Christ, but later changed his mind and called the 'Representative of Mankind', which also became the title of the sculpture. To the left of this figure, Ahriman and Lucifer appear, symbolizing both the vital role they play in the evolution of humanity and the threat they pose to proper human development when one of them succeeds to gain dominance. Underneath, in a kind of subterranean grotto, Ahriman reappears, chained to the ground by a kind of tree roots; another figure floating over him may represent Lucifer again. According to one of his disciples, Steiner claimed that Lucifer and Ahriman had personally posed for him to make the sculpture: and while the former had more or less willingly complied, the latter had to be forced into submission by Steiner's psychic power (the unruly sprite would later take revenge by breaking one of the glass windows in the cult room).[862]

children of Lucifer

> How sad you are and how beautiful,
> O my Genius, my God, my Lucifer!
>
> (Comme tu es triste et comme tu es beau,
> ô mon Génie, mon Dieu, mon Lucifer!)

This exclamation of adoration occurs in the play 'Les Enfants de Lucifer' by Edouard Schuré (1841-1929), which he published in 1900, exactly at the turn of the century.[863] Schuré was no obscure name at the time; earlier, he had created a furore with his book *Les Grands Initiés* (1889), a nineteenth-century New Age bestseller (if this slight anachronism is allowable) that traced the historical path of secret esoteric wisdom through Rama, Krishna, Plato, and Jesus. His play would not earn him as much fame as his book, but it is well worth a look, as it gives a perfect digest of the alternative myth of Satan that had evolved during the nineteenth century.

Les Enfants de Lucifer is situated somewhere in the first centuries of the Christian Era and opens with Théokles, a young Greek from the city of Dionysia, seeking shelter during a journey in a mysterious 'Temple of the Unknown God'.[864] When this unknown god is invoked, he appears to be no one else but Lucifer, who gives Théokles the new name of Phosphoros (which is, significantly, only the Greek synonym for the angel's own name). When his disciple asks him what he must do to be like him, the god answers: 'Croire en toi-même, et lutter avec l'Éternel de toute la force de ton être.'[865]

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[860] Rudolf Steiner, *Christus in verhouding tot Lucifer en Ahriman: De drievoudige gestalte*, tr. J. Stolk-van Greuninge (Driebergen: Zevenster 1986), 22. See on Steiner's theories in this respect Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1:631-637

[861] Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 2:1111-1116.

[862] Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 2:1114. The nine and a half meter sculpture was never finished but had been meant to occupy a central place in the first Dornach Goetheaneum. After this structure burned down on New year's eve, the 'Menschheitsrepräsentant' was stored on an attic for some years; today, it can be found in a side-room of the second Goetheaneum that serves as columbarium (Ibidem, 1:1111n).

[863] Édouard Schuré, *Le théâtre de l'âme* (Paris: Perrin, 1900), 1-159; quote 51.

[864] The pun on the story of Paul the Apostle on the Areopagus can of course hardly be misunderstood: see Acts of the Apostles 17, 16-34.

Armed with this advice, Théokles/Phosphoros next sets out to retrieve his childhood love Cléonice, who has become a nun in a Christian monastery. After some initial resistance, the young girl in due course succumbs to the 'diabolical' charms of her long-lost friend. Together they return to their native city Dionysia, where they uproot the power of the emperor and the bishop. When the populace fills the street with cheers to 'Lucifer Libérateur', Théokles/Phosphoros addresses them in a stirring speech.[866] 'À quoi vous sert le dernier né des dieus?' he asks the crowds, and the answer he gives is this: 'À être des hommes libres, à ne ramper devant César ni devant la croix; à savoir que la Beauté, la Verité et la Justice sont en vous; à conclure avec eux un pacte qui vous rende maîtres de vous-mêmes et des autres. Si chacun de vous ne se sent pas un Lucifer pour braver et César et l'Église, vous n'êtes pas dignes de mourir avec moi pour Dionysia, la mère des héros et la cité des âmes libres!'[867]
However, all ends in tragedy when the expelled bishop returns, accompanied by an overwhelming force of imperial troops. Théokles seeks refuge once again in the Temple of the Unknown God, where together with Cléonice he invokes Lucifer anew. The fallen angel appears, but proclaims he cannot help them. The times of trial have come: the Christian spirit of submission will now rule the earth. 'Mais je remonterai de mes ténèbres,' he assures them, 'Je briserai ma chaîne, j'agiterai mon flambeau. Un temps viendra où nous régnerons ensemble sur la terre […].'[868] After these words, he disappears from view with a last, fading 'Per… se… vere!…' In the meantime, the soldiers arrive, led by the bishop who enters crying 'Death to the children of Lucifer!' Rather than falling in his hands, the two lovers prefer to die the *mors romana*, committing suicide before the altar of Lucifer.

We need not doubt which time it was Schuré was thinking of as the time that Lucifer would reappear. It was, of course, his own: and he had good reason for doing so. The nineteenth century, we have seen, witnessed an unprecedented effort in western civilization to rehabilitate Satan. The background to this rehabilitation was a deeply felt dissatisfaction with the Christian religion and/or its institutional manifestations. Rooted in Enlightenment critique on the Christian faith, this opposition against Christianity had been catalysed by the French Revolution and had found mythological expression in the figure of Satan with a number of prominent Romantic poets. It was within the framework of the struggle against throne and altar (dramatically personified in Schuré's play by the Roman Emperor and the Christian bishop) that Satan could take on a new role. From a supernatural personage responsible for cosmic misfortune, he had become a symbol for freedom and liberation: liberation from political and religious oppression; liberation from repressive sexual morals and a 'Christian' contempt of the body; liberation from the religious shackles of the mind that hindered the glorious advance of science or esoteric knowledge. The old mythological associations of Satan with pride, rebellion, lust, and the lure of knowledge now came to be viewed in a different light. Unexpectedly, the fallen angel could now be seen as the 'Genius of Science, Liberty and Human Individuality,' as Schuré described him in his introduction to *Les Enfants de Lucifer*.[869]
It must again be emphasized that this was a minority position in the nineteenth century, held by a small part of the cultural elite. In other parts of society, old, time-honoured views on Satan and Satanism continued to flourish, and we will meet some of their representatives in

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[865] Schuré, *Le théâtre de l'âme*, 51. See for Schuré and an anlysis of this play: Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 2:1019-1028.
[866] Schuré, *Le théâtre de l'âme*, 102.
[867] Schuré, *Le théâtre de l'âme*, 126.
[868] Schuré, *Le théâtre de l'âme*, 140.
[869] Schuré, *Le théâtre de l'âme*, xvii.

the next two chapters. Nonetheless, the new pro-Satanic minority was a significant one. An impressive catalogue of nineteenth-century cultural icons has filed along on the preceding pages. Some of them envisioned an ultimate reconciliation between Satan and Christianity, or God, or Christ, however radically redefined. This had been the theme of the majority of the French 'Satanist' poets and would be a prominent feature of the new religious movement of anthroposophy. Edouard Schuré was also devoted to this conviction. 'Lucifer, Génie de la Science, de la Liberté et de l'Individualité humaine, est l'adversaire implacable de l'Église sous sa forme actuelle,' he stated, 'mais il n'est pas l'adversaire du Christ, quoiqu'il se développe en sens invers; il est son complement.'[870] In the final scene of his play, Théokles is told he can find truth 'where the star of Lucifer shines through the cross of Christ.'[871] As a matter of fact, Schuré and Steiner were personal friends and both active in the theosophical movement, and Steiner would direct performances of *Les Enfants de Lucifer* in 1909 and 1910.[872]

Other sympathizers with Satan took a less conciliatory stance towards Christian religion. To them, Christianity had been the bad dream of Western civilization, a monstrous structure of oppression that had to be demolished as soon as possible. It had brought an end to the glorious sanity of the Classical world (often perceived by them as one great Dionysia), had made thousands of innocents perish at the stake, had humiliated men of genius like Galileo. For people like Percy Bysshe Shelley, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Jules Michelet, or H. P. Blavatsky, Jehovah and Satan virtually changed places, the first becoming the 'demon-god' of biblical cruelty, the latter a deity-like mythological representative for all that was good.

We have seen in the preceding pages how this Satan penetrated important domains of nineteenth-century (counter)culture. Satan became a political icon among some extreme fringes of the revolutionary movement; and the rehabilitation of the angel of evil inspired some authors to a similar rehabilitation of groups that had been accused of worshipping the devil in the past. Variants of the Romantic Satan even gained ontological, metaphysical stature in the new religious movements of anthroposophy and theosophy, where they enjoyed a certain measure of veneration. Starting out as a Romantic Satanist himself, the French occultist Éliphas Lévi brought radical adaptations to this new Satan to fit a new political and social agenda – prefiguring and preparing a fundamental change in the perception of Satan in the religious Satanism of the next century. In none of these religious movements and in none of the domains we studied, however, do we encounter something like an independent religious Satanism – notwithstanding the fact, as we have argued at the beginning of this chapter, that the essential preparatory steps for such a Satanism had already been taken in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Anarchist ideologues like Proudhon and Bakunin did merely use Satan as a provocative rhetorical tool to express their anticlerical and antireligious tendencies: apart from this, the devil did not affect their theories or convictions in any meaningful way. Historians and writers of historical romance like Sand, Michelet, and Leland described religious Satanism as something of the past or fast on its way to become so: although they considered it as a valuable pre-figuration of the Western revolution pointing out programmatic themes that remained highly significant, none of them suggested actually resuscitating the historical cults they purported to portray. Neither, for that matter, would it be accurate to designate the pioneers of nineteenth-century alternative religion who we

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[870] Schuré, *Le théâtre de l'âme*, cvii; see also xvi: 'En ce drame, l'homme incarne l'hellénisme [i.e. paganism], la femme personnifie l'âme chrétienne, et leur fusion s'opère par le miracle de l'Amour.'

[871] Schuré, *Le théâtre de l'âme*, 142.

[872] Osterkamp, *Lucifer*, 230; Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 2:1018, 1025. On Steiner and Schuré, see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 2:1020-1024. Schuré obviously was also inspired by Lévi's books: the account of the Fall of Lucifer in the play is only a very slightly adapted version of that recounted in *Dogme et Rituel* – witness Lucifer's proclamation to the deity: 'Je suis l'Intelligence et la liberté, je suis la lumière! Je ne te obéirai pas. C'est par moi-même que je veux être, savoir et conquérir !' (Schuré, *Le théâtre de l'âme*, 52)

discussed as religious Satanists. Lévi saw himself as a Catholic Cabbalist, Blavatsky found truth in Eastern religion, Steiner considered the Christ as the embodiment of the divine principle. Satan formed just a part of their doctrines, not its object of worship. Although we may say that elements of religious Satanism appear with them, we are definitely not witnessing the emergence of a full-fledged religious Satanism.

I like to end this chapter by noting a last significant aspect which the historical characters and groups we portrayed share with the Romantic Satanists. All their religious or ideological outlooks in essence centre on Humanity or humankind as points of reference. This applies to Blavatsky's theosophy, for instance: 'The 'Fallen Angels', so-called, are *Humanity itself*,' the Russian esoteric author wrote in *The secret Doctrine*; 'the whole personnel' of the old myths is in fact nothing but 'the *Seed* of Humanity' around whom 'our physical frames have grown and developed to what they are now'.[873] But it is equally valid as a description of Steiner's anthroposophy and Lévi's 'magism', as well as the various anarchist and historiographical authors we discussed. Satan, for all of them, represented in essence man's tendencies, or mankind itself – even though he may have had an independent ontological existence aside from this, as was the case with the Lucifer of Lévi, Blavatsky, and Steiner. As Schuré put it: 'there is a point where man who wants to become god meets god who has become man'.[874] Although he was actually referring to Christ here, the same rapprochement was attributed in his 'theatre of the soul' to Lucifer, that semi-divine personage who is in fact mankind itself, while man, in his turn, gropes to fashion his own destiny like a rebel angel – 'chacun un Lucifer'.

[873] Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, 2:274, 2:284 (Blavatsky was talking here of Indian mythology, but the context allows for a more general interpretation of her words).
[874] Schuré, *Théâtre de l'âme*, xvii: 'il est un point où l'homme qui veut devenir dieu se rencontre avec le dieu fait homme.'

Intermezzo 2
Charles Baudelaire: Litanies to Satan

Se livrer à Satan, qu'est-ce que c'est?
Baudelaire, *Fusées*, XIV, 1

Readers familiar with our subject will probably have missed one name in our study up to now: that of Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), the French poet who acquired literary fame and instant notoriety with an iniquitous collection of poetry entitled *Les Fleurs du Mal* ('The Flowers of Evil', 1857). This omission has a tactical reason: I think Baudelaire is much better understood when we see him as a transitional figure between Romantic Satanism and the different attitude towards Satan that would become en vogue in the fin de siècle. It might be said, as we will attempt to show in this intermezzo, that the great poet of Décadence exemplifies and inaugurates this transition in person, both in his life and in his work.
Baudelaire's frequent appearance in discussions of Satanism is primarily due to one poem published in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, the 'Litanies de Satan' ('Litany of Satan').[875] With its opening lines

> O toi, le plus savant, et le plus beau des Anges,
> Dieu trahi par le sort et privé de louanges,
> (O most wise and must beautiful of Angels,
> God betrayed by fate and bereft of praises,)

this song of praise to the archangel 'à qui l'on a fait tort' would attain iconic status in the history of Satanism.[876] Modeled on the Roman-Catholic *Miserere*, the poem sings of Satan as the protector of the drunkard and the convict, the support of the inventor and the revolutionary, the instigator of love and hope, and the 'great king of subterranean things', interspersed with the continuously repeated refrain 'O Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère!' ('O Satan, take pity on my long misery!'). The long litany ends with a 'prayer' that expresses the wish to find eternal peace in Satan's Paradise:

> Gloire et louange à toi, Satan, dans les hauteurs
> Du Ciel, où tu régnas, et dans les profondeurs
> De l'Enfer, où, vaincu, tu rêves en silence!
> Fais que mon âme un jour, sous l'Arbre de Science,
> Près de loi se repose, à l'heure où sur ton front
> Comme un Temple nouveau ses rameaux s'épandront!
>
> (Satan, to thee be praise upon the Height
> Where thou wast king of old, and in the night
> Of Hell, where thou dost dream on silently.
> Grant that one day beneath the Knowledge-tree,
> When it shoots forth to grace thy royal brow,
> My soul may sit, that cries upon thee now.[877])

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[875] References to Baudelaire feature in Dvorak, *Satanismus*, 327-337; Frick, *Die Satanisten*, 2:145-148; Medway, *Lure of the Sinister*, 12; Schmidt, *Satanismus*, 96-100; and Zacharias, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe*, 126-129, as well as Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising*, 21.
[876] Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal: Texte de la seconde edition suivi des pieces supprimées en 1857 et des additions de 1868. Édition critique établie par Jacques Crépet et Georges Blin* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1968), 243-246.
[877] Translation from James Elroy Flecker, *The collected poems of James Elroy Flecker*, ed. John Squire (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1916), 42-44. Flecker's translation of the 'Litany to Satan' first appeared in his volume of verse *Forty-Two Poems* from 1911.

Even a cursory reading of this poem allows us to understand why it could be perceived as such a shocking statement of pro-Satanic proclivity. The 'classic' Romantic Satanists had portrayed Satan as a more or less admirable mythological character, but none of them had addressed him in such a direct way, in a form that is explicitly presented by the poet as religious. While they undeniably had, in some cases, voiced admiration for the devil, Baudelaire's litany, at first sight, expresses plain adoration. As such, the poem can certainly be understood as a radical new evolvement of earlier Romantic Satanism, to which it clearly is indebted – the fact alone that the Litany to Satan was included in the section 'Revolt' of *Les Fleurs du Mal* speaks volumes here. Reminiscences of Sand, De Vigny, and even Byron can be pointed out in its lines, and we can see the three classic Satanic attributes of Sex, Science, and Liberty return once more, as well as Satan's archetypical Romantic role of shield and support of the spurned, the marginalized, and the rebellious.[878] Another tell-tale sign of the influence of earlier Romanticism on Baudelaire can be found in the remark in one of his notes that, for him, the apotheosis of tragic beauty was incorporated by Satan 'after the manner of Milton'.[879] At the same time, however, 'Litanies de Satan' exhales a markedly different atmosphere than we found in most examples of 'classic' Romantic Satanism. It is, for want of a better word, more 'dark', more ambiguous also; we do not encounter a Satan here that is heroically stepping into the light to emancipate and liberate humanity.

We will delve into Baudelaire's possible philosophical motives for this shift in presentation later. First, however, something must be told about the developments in literary history that preceded and partially clarify this more radical, darker, and more ambiguous Satan. Baudelaire's style was not without its precursors. In the years around the July Revolution of 1831, a loose group of young French artists designated as Bouzingos ('noise-makers'), and also known as the 'Pétit Cénacle' or Jeunes France, had propounded a more ferocious and more pessimistic form of Romantic protest.[880] Apart from a few architects and painters (including Delacroix), the group consisted exclusively of minor poets, among whom only the names of Pétrus Borel, Philothée O'Neddy (pseudonym for Théophile Dondey de Santeny), Gérard de Nerval, and Théophile Gautier have retained a marginal yet enduring place in the annals of literary history. Exceedingly Byronic, decidedly anti-establishment, and evidently juvenile, this gang of artistic rowdies had taken Romanticism to a new and feverish pitch. Although politically speaking, mostly radically inclined, they had grown pessimistic about the

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[878] Reminiscent of Sand is in particular the line 'O Prince de l'exil, à qui l'on a fait tort'; 'Toi qui, même aux lépreux, aux parias maudits,/Enseignes par l'amour le goût du Paradis,' reminds one strongly of de Vigny's *Eloa*; Byron's Cain might have inspired the refrain 'Père adoptif de ceux qu'en sa noire colère/Du paradis terrestre a chassés Dieu le Père'. Some of these influences are mentioned in Crépet end Blin's critical edition of *Fleurs du Mal*, 512-515. As a more direct inspiration for the form of the Litany, Crépet and Blin, as well as Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:423, point to the judicial procedures against the possessed nun Marie de Sains in 1614, during which she spoke about psalms and litanies sung for the devil at the witches' Sabbath: 'Lucifer, Miserere nobis; Belzébuth, Miserere nobis, etc'. References to the litanies were widely available in publications from Baudelaire's days, for instance in Jules Garinet, *Histoire de la magie en France, depuis le commencement de la monarchie jusqu'à nos jours*. Paris: Foulon, 1818), 195-197, while Collin de Plancy also cites it in his *Dictionnaire des Sciences occultes* from 1846 (cf. Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:423, who also remarks that the name of Satan is missing in this seventeenth century litany: 'Ne serait-ce pas ce qui aurait donné à Baudelaire l'idée de consacrer des litanies à Satan lui-même?').

[879] Charles Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes. Fusées – Mon cœur mis á nu – Carnet. Édition critique établie par Jacques Crépet et Georges Blin* (Paris, Librairie José Corti 1949) 22 [*Fusées* X, 35-39]: '…je ne conçois guères (mon cerveau serait-il un miroir ensorcelé?) un type de Beauté où il n'y ait du Malheur. – Appuyé sur, – d'autres diraient: obsédé par – ces idées, on conçoit qu'il me serait difficile de ne pas conclure que le plus parfait type de Beauté virile est Satan, – à la manière de Milton.'

[880] For the Bouzingos, I have mainly relied on two biographies of Pétrus Borel: Enid Starkie, *Petrus Borel, the Lycanthrope: His Life and Times* (New York: New Directions, 1954), and Jean-Luc Steinmetz, *Pétrus Borel. Vocation: Poète maudit* ([Paris]: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2002).

prospects for fundamental social and political change and disillusioned about the power of art and literature to make a change in wider society. Turning away from a France that was dominated by church, nobility and monarchy, and after the 1831 Revolution by the even more despised bourgeoisie, they chanted the status of the artist as a social outcast and celebrated the domain of the artistic and the imagination as the only place where someone could really be free, and thus, in some sense, be real. 'Being more creative than God,' as O'Neddy put it in appropriate line of poetry, was an adequate summary of their artistic intentions.[881] The Bouzingos in this respect pioneered later ideas about 'l'art pour l'art' and the autonomy of the artistic domain. They also can be considered as early examples of bohemians: for a short while, for instance, they lived aside from society in an impromptu commune in Montmartre, until the neighbours started to complain about their drunken parties and nudist practices.[882] Moreover, their anti-establishment and anti-bourgeois attitude translated itself in a certain penchant for gothic destruction in poetics and in the occasional acts of rhetorical violence against the (Christian) deity – both as a religious entity in his own right, and in his capacity as a symbolic representative of the seemingly immutable political and social status quo. Their corresponding sympathy for Satan was put in equally uncompromising terms, for instance by O'Neddy, who in *Feu et Flamme* ('Fire and Flame', 1833) raised his fist to heaven with the following exclamation:

> Je m'en irais, la nuit, par des sites incultes;
> Et là, me raillant du Seigneur,
> Je tourbillonnerais dans la magie infâme,
> J'évoquerais le Diable..... et je vendrais mon âme
> Pour quelques mille ans de bonheur![883]
>
> (I will go, at night, to unholy places,
> And there, mocking the Lord,
> I will wallow myself in infamous magic;
> I will evoke the Devil… and I will sell my soul
> For a few chance millennia of happiness!)

Baudelaire was born too late to participate in the original (and very brief) heydays of the Bouzingos. When he appeared upon the cultural scene, O'Neddy had sunk into oblivion, whiling out his days as (of all things) a civil servant; Borel was living in a tool shed in the countryside and would soon depart for Algeria, while a destitute Nerval would eventually hang himself in desperation in a morose Parisian alleyway. Baudelaire, however, avidly went through their scattered work and met some of the principal Bouzingots personally, becoming particularly acquainted with Théophile Gautier, to whom he dedicated *Les Fleurs du Mal*.[884] The Jeunes France influenced him in several respects; and in a way, the 'Litanies de Satan' and its two accompanying ungodly poems in the section 'Revolt', can be regarded as a late fruit of the extreme Romantic Satanism of some of the Bouzingos.

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[881] 'Être plus artiste que Dieu!!!…': from 'Rodemontade,' in Philotée O'Neddy, *Feu et Flamme* (Paris: librairie orientale de Dondey-Dupré, 1833), 33.
[882] Starkie, *Petrus Borel*, 89-95.
[883] O'Neddy, *Feu et Flamme*, 31-32. Starkie, *Petrus Borel*, 193-194, claims that Borel did 'efforts to practise Sadism and Satanism', but does not corroborate her statement with facts. Probably she meant that he led a very wicked life, or intended to characterize his literary output. See Hoog, 'La révolte métaphysique et religieuse des petits romantiques,' for some more instances of Romantic Satanism by the Jeunes-France.
[884] In his dedication, Baudelaire called Gautier 'most beloved and most venerated master' and 'perfect magician in French literature'. Baudelaire also published in *Satan-Corsaire*, a periodical edited by Pétrus Borel and his brother.

Were the 'Litanies de Satan' just an example of Bouzingo provocation, or had Baudelaire gone further? Given the liturgical character of the Litany to Satan, it is not surprising that a number of authors have claimed that Baudelaire was involved in actual devil worship.[885] This idea will certainly have found additional stimulus in the brooding look of the poet on some photographs and his original intent to include exactly 66 poems in *Les Fleurs du Mal* – a number that could well be pushed up, he declared, 'to the Kabalistic 666 or even 6666…'[886] Some scholars have been more specific and assert that Baudelaire belonged to a 'Satanic chapel' of Romantic poets that is said to have flourished in the years around 1846. According to their story, this circle of poets convened every Sunday morning to 'invoke Satan' with the most 'anti-bourgeois' and 'diabolical' poetry they could think of. In February 1846, for instance, they celebrated the seven deadly sins in verse, dedicating their works to Satan in words that, according to a modern historian, 'might better have been left unspoken':

A toi, Satan, bel archange déchu,
A qui le périlleux honneur échut
De guerroyer contre un pouvoir injuste,
Je m'offre tout entier et sans retour,
Mon esprit, mon sens, mon cœur, mon amour,
Et mes sombres vers dans leur beauté fruste.[887]

(To you, Satan, beautiful fallen angel
To whom the perilous honour pertains
To battle against an unjust power
Do I offer myself completely and irreversible;
My spirit, my senses, my heart, my love,
And my sombre verses of frustrated beauty.)

There are a number of problems with this story, however. The one and only source we have for the existence of this 'Satanic chapel' is a quaint book by Louis Maigron entitled *Le Romantisme et les mœurs* ('Romanticism and Morals'), in which the author, although writing more than sixty years after the events, attempts to prove the nefarious influence extended by Romanticism on French morals. Maigron does not give any sources for his description of the 'satanic cult', nor for the excerpts of poetry he cites; in other words, the whole thing could just as well have been thought up by himself.[888] While I do not think this probable, it is highly doubtful that actual Satanist rites were practised at this circle. Maigron seems to mean a lot of things when he uses the word 'Satanism', ranging from simple wickedness over writing bad verse dedicated to the devil to full-fledged necromantic rituals; but nothing in his description gives occasion to presume that this diabolical 'chapel' was anything else than a group of unruly poets coming together to share their 'sombre verses of frustrated beauty'.[889] The whole thing sounds rather like some late Bouzingo offshoot, and if Baudelaire had been a member, the group might thus have formed a further *traîte-d'union* between him and the Jeunes France. But as a matter of fact, Maigron does not mention him as a participant; he only remarks upon

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[885] Frick, *Die Satanisten*, 2:145-148; Zacharias, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe*, 129, calls him 'vielleicht die erste voll bewußte Persönlichkeit in der Geschichte des Satanskultes' (in the copy I consulted, an anonymous reviewer had scrabbled with crayon 'bull-shit' in the margins of this sentence).

[886] Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes*, 132 [Carnet, XLIII]: 'jusqu'au cabalastique 666 et même 6666…'

[887] Maigron, *Le Romantisme et les mœurs*, 187. The modern historian in question is Russell, *Mephistopheles*, 204; my translation is partly based on his.

[888] Maigron, *Le Romantisme et les mœurs*, 187-192. According to Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:431-436, the documents consulted by Maigron subsequently became lost, so we have no chance to establish the truth of the story. Both Frick and Zacharias repeat Maigron's story and link it to Baudelaire.

[889] Maigron, *Le Romantisme et les mœurs*, 187-193, speaks about 'groups' of Satanists, but admits to know details about only one. The other references he gives mostly concern deviant (homo)sexual practises.

the 'Baudelarian perfume' of some of their poems. To put it briefly: there is no indication at all that Baudelaire was a member of this circle, no indication that these poets did anything other than compose provocative poetry, or, in fact, that this circle ever existed, except for the seven-odd pages in Louise Maigron's rather obscure study.
Even more creative is the identification made by the German scholar Karl Frick between Maigron's elusive group of 'Satanists' and the 'Club des Hachichins', an informal group of nineteenth-century Parisian gentlemen who experimented with soft drugs. Because Baudelaire was a member of the latter group, Frick implies, his involvement in ritual Satanism is plausible.[890] The 'Club de Hachichins', so much is certain, *has* indeed existed: it was founded by a physician and psychiatrist called Jacques-Joseph Moreau de Tours (1804-1884), who distributed a home-made concoction of sugar, orange juice, hashish and various other spices during its sessions. Apart from this, however, the club was as harmless as the average Dutch coffee shop, of which it was a kind of exclusive nineteenth century precursor. The rumours about the Satanic character of its activities may have sprung into existence because of a witty report written by Théophile de Gautier about his visit to the club, in which he describes being pestered by an impish, diabolic figure during his narcotic delirium. It was probably this drugs-induced fantasy that has brought about the link between de Club des Hachichins and Satanism.[891]

Not all authors who declare Baudelaire a Satanist, however, understand this term in the gross sense of staging macabre ceremonies of diabolic worship; and our prior discussions of Romantic Satanism have made abundantly clear that literature by itself can already provide ample space for the unfolding of the religious.[892] Was Baudelaire such a Satanist? First of all, in order to answer this question, we have to determine *which* Baudelaire we are talking about. Over time, there were several personae of the poet. The first Baudelaire, for all his dandyism, was a political radical; a contemporary acquaintance remembered him as 'yet another new disciple of Proudhon'.[893] When revolution came again in February 1848, Baudelaire could be found on the barricades, gun in hand and bandana in his hair – like Constant, he even launched his own political periodical in the aftermath of the revolt, *Le Salut du Peuple* ('The Welfare of the People'), although only two issues of this ephemeral publication would appear. More than one biographer dates his poems of revolt, including the 'Litanies de Satan', to this period, and presupposes a strong Proudhonian inspiration for them.[894]
The revolutionary Baudelaire of 1848 who might have written the 'Litanies de Satan', however, was no longer the Baudelaire of 1857 who choose to include them into the definite selection of *Les Fleurs du Mal.* As had happened to Constant, the events that followed the 1848 revolution had estranged him from his former revolutionary fervour. The massive popular support for autocracy that manifested itself at the plebiscites of 1851 and 1852 disgusted him with 'the people' for whose welfare he had earlier striven.[895] He adopted the

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[890] Frick, *Die Satanisten*, 2:141: 'Baudelaire soll einer Gruppe von Satanisten nahegestanden haben, die sich Mitte der 40er Jahre in Paris etabliert hatte und angeblich auch Satansmessen abhielt. Sie dürfte mit dem Club Haschischins identisch sein. [...] Diese Gruppe soll Baudelaire zu den 'Litanies de Satan' inspiriert haben [...].'
[891] Théophile Gautier, 'Le club de Hachichins,' *Revue des Deux Mondes* 1 (1846): 248-259. For details on the 'Club de Hachichins', see also F. W. J. Hemmings, *Baudelaire the Damned: A Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982), 159-160.
[892] Something like this, I presume, is meant by Medway, *Lure of the Sinister*, 12, and Schmidt, *Satanismus*, 92, 96-100, when they designate Baudelaire as a Satanist.
[893] T.J. Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France 1848-1851* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), 163, citing Jean Wallon.
[894] Burton, *Baudelaire and the Second Republic*, 197; Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*, 163-171, quoted with acquiescence by Hemmings, *Baudelaire the Damned*, 196.
[895] Burton, *Baudelaire and the Second Republic*, 354. On Baudelaire's political evolution, of which our representation must of need remain very schematic, see this author, as well as Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois*.

French reactionary writer Joseph de Maistre as one of his *maîtres à penser*, and under the inspiration of this author, and in far echo of Plato's *Republic*, the thoughts he now begun to formulate seemed to take in increasingly reactionary turn. 'There is no other reasonable and reliable form of government but an aristocracy,' he wrote in his intimate cahiers, adding somewhat later: 'Among men only the poet, the priest and the soldier are great. The man who sings, the man who blesses, the man who sacrifices others and himself. The others are made for the whip.'[896]

This new political orientation did not translate itself in a renewed political activism, however, but rather in an a-political retreat into art. Art for the sake of art and the creation of an autonomous domain of personalized esthetics became the sole means with which he confronted society. 'A dandy does nothing,' he noted, 'Can you imagine a dandy addressing the people, except to deride it?'[897] When he was forced to leave France for Belgium in 1864, this had nothing to do with his marked antipathy to Napoleon III, but with his desperate need to elude his clamouring creditors. His new host country, arguably the first industrialized mass society on the continent, only deepened his aversion for *demos* and democracy, while at the same time his declarations of sympathy for Christianity grew more frequent. 'I am Catholic and Roman, and I have reflected a great deal on that,' he stated.[898] In one of his last works, *Pauvre Belgique!* ('Poor Belgium!'), he combined his new anti-egalitarianism and rekindled Roman Catholicism to rail at the way in which the Belgians, according to his perception, were engrossed in shallow, boorish pleasures and the philosophical vulgarity of optimistic materialism (termed by him the 'paganism of imbeciles'). 'The Christian idea (the God invisible, creator, omniscient, conscious, omni-provident),' he wrote with disgust, 'Can not enter into a Belgian brain.'[899]

These and similar utterances have inclined some critics to the other extreme, namely that Baudelaire was not a Satanist, but rather a devout if troubled Roman-Catholic.[900] Can we describe the Baudelaire who published *Les Fleurs du Mal* as a Roman Catholic reactionary? Although the poet himself jokingly defended the Catholicity of the work – even if it were to be diabolical, he wrote in a letter, there surely did not exist anybody more Catholic than the devil? – this nevertheless would amount to a misrepresentation.[901] In fact, Baudelaire's partial rejection of the Western Revolution had been preceded by the Bouzingos, whose inspiration in turn derived in part from Byron. Although republican in outlook, this did not necessarily imply *democracy* for them: being ruled by the detested bourgeoisie or the sullen masses would be as unsavoury as the reign of king and church.[902] 'Mon républicanisme, c'est de la

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[896] Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes*, 64 [*Mon cœur mis à nu* XIII, 22]: 'Il n'y a de gouvernement raisonnable et assuré que l'aristocratique.'; Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes*, 81 [*Mon cœur mis à nu* XXVI, 47]: 'Il n'y a de grand parmi les hommes que le poëte, le prêtre et le soldat, l'homme qui chante, l'homme qui bénit, l'homme qui sacrifie et se sacrifie. Le reste est fait pour le fouet.' The English translation of the last quote is cited from Pierre Emmanuel, *Baudelaire: The Paradox of Redemptive Satanism*, trans. Robert T. Cargo (s.l.: University of Alabama Press, 1970), 158-159.

[897] Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes*, 64 [*Mon cœur mis à nu* XIII, 22]: 'Un Dandy ne fait rien. Vous figurez-vous un Dandy parlant au peuple, excepté pour le bafouer ?'

[898] Cited in Emmanuel, *Baudelaire*, 159

[899] Letter to Ancelle 18 February 1866, cited in Emmanuel, *Baudelaire*, 154; *Pauvre Belgique!*, cited in Emmanuel, *Baudelaire*, 154

[900] Cf. Emmanuel, *Baudelaire*, 15-17, and 19: Russell notes that he took up confession upon his dying bed.

[901] Letter to V. de Laprade, cited in Emmanuel, *Baudelaire*, 158

[902] Steinmetz, *Pétrus Borel*, 91; Starkie, *Petrus Borel*, 93. Baudelaire also drew this parallel himself in an unpublished notice he wrote about Borel (in a collection of notes entitled 'Réflexions sur mes contemporains'; for the section on Borel, see [Charles] Baudelaire, *Curiosités esthétiques, L'Art romantique et autres œuvres critiques* (Paris, Éditions Garnier Frères, 1962), 757-760): 'Cet esprit à la fois littéraire et républicain, à l'inverse de la passion démocratique et bourgeoise qui nous a plus tard si cruellement opprimés, était agité à la fois par une haine aristocratique sans limites, sans restrictions, sans pitié, contre les rois et contre la bourgeoisie, et d'une

lycantrophie,' Borel had famously written, explaining he was a Republican 'because that word represents to me the greatest independence possible that society and civilisation can afford'.[903] What he and his *partennaires* had dreamt about foremost, was a vaguely-defined 'Reign of Art'.[904] It may be noted that Baudelaire also mentioned the poet as the first and foremost of the ruling classes he envisioned – in the position, thus, where Plato had placed the philosopher in *The Republic*. Furthermore, in 1861 he still maintained that he had always remained a republican as well as a 'fervent Catholic'.[905]

Not only in this political position, also in his spiritual attitude had Baudelaire set forth in the tracks of Romanticism in its most extreme manifestation. Of course, the Bouzingos, anti-clerical to the core as they had been, would have found issue with his ever more intense flirt with Catholicism. Yet underneath this apparent rift a basic unity in outlook can be detected. Crucial keywords of Romanticism reappear in Baudelaire, prominent among them Imagination, called 'the queen of [human] faculties' by the poet. 'The imagination is the queen of what is truly real, and the *possible* is one of the provinces of the real,' Baudelaire wrote in his review of the Salon of 1859, 'She is quite positively in parentage with the infinite. […] As she has created the world (one can say so, I believe, even in a religious sense), it is only just for her to govern it.'[906] In *Les Fleurs du Mal*, greeted by Flaubert as a rejuvenation of Romanticism, the same theme reappears. Although this collection of poetry is rich in subthemes and literary motifs – risqué eroticism, (pseudo)Christian obsessions with suffering and guilt, dandy-like spleen, to name but a few – one of the most important elements is certainly the quest for the ideal that man and especially the poet must undertake. Only in the domain of the ideal, in the domain of 'dreams', of the imagination, can man find his essence and his freedom – freedom, in particular, of the 'ennui' that is caused by material world that can only repeat itself, the 'dull round of a mill with complicated wheels' Blake had already referred to some seventy years ago.[907] In a well known poem from *Fleurs du Mal*, 'La Voix' ('The Voice'), the poet-narrator is spoken to by two voices during his childhood, one offering him a appetite as big as the world, the other asking him not the stop here but to 'come wandering in dreams,/Beyond the possible, beyond that what is known!'.[908] The infant chooses the latter option, and thereby its calling as a poet.

It is in this context – as a religious expression of a cherished tendency for the ideal – which we have to understand Baudelaire's Catholicism, at least in the period that *Les Fleurs du Mal* appears. In his notebooks, he talks of faith as 'supremacy of the pure idea, with Christians as with the communistic babouvist,' while he calls priests 'the servants and sectarians of the Imagination'.[909] Baudelaire's religion, in brief, is essentially that of Romanticism. This is

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sympathie générale pour tout ce qui en art représentait l'excès dans la couleur et dans la forme, pour tout ce qui était à la fois intense, pessimiste, byronien; dilettantisme d'une nature singulière, et que peuvent seules expliquer les haïssables circonstances où était renfermée une jeunesse ennuyée et turbulente.'

[903] Steinmetz, *Pétrus Borel*, 67

[904] 'Nous rêvions le règne de l'Art,' O'Neddy would declare in retrospective, 'Il nous semblait qu'un jour la Religion devait, dans ses conditions d'*extériorité*, être remplacée par l'*Esthétique*.' Cf. Philotée O'Neddy, *Lettre inédite de Philothée O'Neddy, auteur de Feu et Flamme, sur le groupe littéraire romantique dit des Bousingos (Théophile Gautier, Gérard de Nerval, Petrus Borel, Bouchardy, Alphonse Brot, etc.)* (Paris: P. Rouquette, 1875). For proper nuance, it must be said that O'Neddy, in this letter, goes on to say that certain members of the group certainly held visions for a 'social revolution', as the preface of his own *Feu et Flamme* indeed attests.

[905] Burton, *Baudelaire and the Second Republic*, 359.

[906] Baudelaire, *Curiosités esthétiques*, 322, 321: 'L'Imagination est la reine du vrai, et le *possible* est une des provinces du vrai. Elle est positivement apparentée avec l'infini. […] Comme elle a créé le monde (on peut dire cela, je crois, même dans un sens religieux), il est juste qu'elle le gouverne.'

[907] Blake, *Poems and Prophecies*, 4.

[908] Baudelaire, *Fleurs du Mal*, 186: 'viens voyager dans les rêves,/Au delà du possible, au delà du connu!'

[909] Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes*, 84: [*Mon Cœur mis à nu*, XXIX, 52]: 'Suprématie de l'idée pure, chez le chrétien comme chez le communiste babouviste.' – English translation from Emmanuel, *Baudelaire*, 158;

made explicit by the poem 'Le Coucher de Soleil Romantique' ('The Sunset of the Romanticism') that appeared at the start of a supplement of *Les Fleurs du Mal* published in 1861.[910] Here the decline of Romanticism (the setting sun of the poem's title) is equated with the disappearance of the divine presence that the poet experiences.

The Romantic essence of Baudelaire's religious views becomes especially clear in his ideas about the devil and the deity.[911] We can get an impression of these from *Mon cœur mis à nu* ('My Heart on Exhibition'), a notebook in which Baudelaire jotted down sketches and keywords for a book of philosophical and personal 'confessions' intended to rival those of Rousseau. 'What is the fall?' Baudelaire noted under the heading theology, 'If it is unity become duality, it is God who has fallen. In other words, would not the creation be the fall of God?'[912] This quasi-Manichean tendency to equate the natural or material world with the emergence of imperfection is translated into his remarks about Satan as well. 'There are in every man, at every moment, two simultaneous postulations, one towards God, the other towards Satan. The invocation to God, or spirituality, is a desire to rise in dignity; that of Satan or animalist is a joy of descending. It is to the latter that one must ascribe the love for women and the intimate conversation with animals, dogs, cats, etcetera.'[913] As Baudelaire already makes clear here himself, this 'joy of descending' that degrades man to an animal becomes explicitly manifest in the domain of the sexual. Moreover, in 'fallen' (i.e. 'dualized') man, this tendency is particularly represented by woman. 'Woman is hungry and she wants to eat. Thirsty and she wants to drink. She is in heat and she wants to be fucked. Big deal! Woman is *natural*, that is to say, abominable.'[914]

Baudelaire here outlines a misogynist conception of the 'fatal woman' that would become popular in the fin de siècle, as we will see. For now, we can observe that the theology sketched here cannot, in any way, be called Satanist. Neither, for that matter, is it 'Roman Catholic' or 'Christian' in any of the accepted meanings of the term. Despite the misleading similarity of the idiom Baudelaire sometimes uses, Christian ideas about moral good or redemption are not very important in all this. It is not so much 'good' and 'evil' in a moral sense which interests the poet, but man's capacity for the 'spiritual' and the 'ideal', for the 'super-natural' in the literal significance of the word, versus his inclination towards 'animalism' in which he is unobtrusively ruled by the laws of nature. Although our spiritual nature enables us to transcend our 'animality' by 'dreaming' and 'imagining' the ideal, we are all, as 'fallen', material human beings, inevitably bound to 'sin' in this respect. Only death will release us from our animal form: as living human beings, the ultimate to which we can strive, according to Baudelaire's paradoxical conclusion, is to *do good and evil consciously*. That may be the background of Baudelaire's much-quoted dictum that the best trick of the

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Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes*, 9 [*Fusées*, II]: 'Les prêtres sont les serviteurs et les sectateurs de l'imagination.'

[910] Baudelaire, *Fleurs du Mal*, 267-268.

[911] For my treatment of Baudelaire in these paragraphs, I am particularly indebted to ideas suggested by Emmanuel, *Baudelaire*, and Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:423-483.

[912] Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes*, 73 [*Mon Cœur mis à nu*, XX, 33] : 'Qu'est-ce que la chute? Si c'est l'unité devenue dualité, c'est Dieu qui a chuté. En d'autres termes, la création ne serait-elle pas la chute de Dieu?' English translation from Emmanuel, *Baudelaire*, 78.

[913] Emmanuel, *Baudelaire*, 106; Baudelaire*, Journaux intimes*, 62 [*Mon Cœur mis à nu,* XI, 1-9]: 'Il y a dans tout homme, à tout heure, deux postulations simultanées, l'une vers Dieu, l'autre vers Satan. L'invocation à Dieu, ou spiritualité, est un désir de monter en grade; celle de Satan, ou animalité, est un joie de descendre. C'est à cette dernière que doivent être rapportés [sic] les amours pour les femmes et les conversations intimes avec les animaux, chiens, chats, etc…'.

[914] Baudelaire*, Journaux intimes*, 53 [*Mon Cœur mis à nu,* III, 5-10]: 'La femme a faim et elle veut manger. Soif et elle veut boire. Elle est en rut et elle veut être foutue. Le beau mérite! La femme est *naturelle*, c'est-à-dire abominable.'

devil is to make people belief he does not exist.[915] It also makes understandable other paradoxical statements of Baudelaire, such as this one about the dominance of 'Satanism' in the present world: 'In reality, Satanism has won, Satan has made himself innocent. Evil that knows itself it is less detestable and closer to healing than evil that is ignorant about itself. G. Sand inferior to De Sade.'[916] Georges Sand, according to Baudelaire, was nothing but a 'big animal' that remained *unaware* that it was doing evil, while De Sade had at least attained a superior level of human development by doing evil *knowingly*.[917]

When this recapitulation of Baudelaire's philosophy is accepted as valid, the similarities with the ideas of Romantic Satanism become obvious. At about the same time Hugo was struggling with similar questions in his *Fin de Satan*, while Byron had discussed comparable concepts in *Cain* three decades before. It is enlightening, however, to point out the differences between Baudelaire and the latter. Byron, if our reading of his texts is correct, had associated Lucifer with the spiritual and the deity with the natural; his *Cain* can be read as a criticism of (his own) Romanticism, with its tendency to emphasize the 'spiritual' world and spurn the humanity of 'common', 'physical' existence. Baudelaire, on the other hand (at least in his notes for *Mon cœur mis à nu*), identifies Satan with the natural and 'God' with the spiritual and ideal: in addition, he wholeheartedly embraces the Romantic notions of spirituality and imaginative creativity as the essence of our humanity (while drawing conclusions from this premises, it must be noted, that certainly exhibit originality).
With this background information, we can approach *Les Fleurs du Mal* and the 'Litanies de Satan' again, and see whether we can put Baudelaire's 'Satanist' utterances in their proper perspective. First of all, it has to be kept in mind that *Fleurs du Mal* is a *collection* of poetry that brought together poems written over years. Practically speaking, Baudelaire intended to gather the best of his poetic works in order to reap a financial profit; in a more substantive way, *Fleurs du Mal* was compiled to form a reflection of the poet's own intellectual, artistic, and spiritual road through life, starting with his birth and ending in death. We do not necessarily have to bend over backwards, like some Baudelaire scholars have done, to construct an absolute coherence between Baudelaire's notes and his earlier poems. 'Litanies de Satan' is the expression of a certain state and/or stage of human existence, and probably also of the existence of Baudelaire himself. This has given the poem its place in Baudelaire's final selection; it would be overly rash as well as inexact to read it as a final statement of faith.
This does not mean that Baudelaire will not have written the poem, or an earlier version of it, without sincerity. One can easily imagine the Proudhonian Baudelaire of around 1848 producing a piece of radical Romantic Satanism like this. And even if the poem does not reflect Baudelaire's genuine convictions at an earlier point in time, it will have reflected a genuine *feeling* that he was able to experience. As he would write in his 1859 Salon review: 'The artist, the true artist, the true poet, must not paint otherwise than according to what he sees and what he feels. He must *truly* be true to his own nature.'[918] That does not mean, once

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[915] This famous quote is from Baudelaire's short prose poem 'Le Joueur généreux' (cf. Charles Baudelaire, *Le spleen de Paris: Petits poèmes en prose* (Paris: Librio, 2010), 53-56 [XXIX]. Baudelaire was not the first to voice this idea; some earlier sources are given by Milner, *Le diable dans la littérature française*, 2:441n.
[916] 'Notes sur Les liaisons dangereuses,' in Baudelaire, *Curiosités esthétiques*, 828-837, there 830: 'En réalité, le satanisme a gagné, Satan s'est fait ingénu. Le mal se connaissant était moins affreux et plus près de la guérison que le mal s'ignorant. G. Sand inférieure à de Sade.'
[917] 'Elle est surtout, et plus que tout autre chose [sic], une grosse bête […]': *Journaux intimes*, 69 [*Mon Cœur mis à nu,* XVII, 27].
[918] Baudelaire, *Curiosités esthétiques*, 320-321: 'L'artiste, le vrai artiste, le vrai poète, ne doit peindre que selon qu'il voit et qu'il sent. Il doit être *réellement* fidèle à sa propre nature.'

again, that we can interpret the Litany to Satan as a factual pronouncement of a theological dogma (once) held by its author – it is exactly against such a narrow idea of 'photographic' realism that Baudelaire was arguing in his review. But it does mean that he was able to partake in the sentiments it expressed. Much the same could probably be said about 'Le reniement de saint Pierre' ('The Denial of Saint Peter'), another poem in the section 'Revolt' reeking of Bouzingo defiance and Romantic Satanism. In this poem, Peter denies Jesus for the second time because the latter let himself be executed passively in obedience to the his father – a 'tyrant gorged on meat and wines' – instead of taking action to realise a better world. The narrator applauds the apostle's decision and confesses that he himself would gladly part from a world 'where action is not the sister of dream', be it through the sword or by using the sword.[919] Here it is hard not to think of Baudealaire's erstwhile revolutionary enthusiasm, given the place of the poem in the section devoted to revolt. Similarly the Litany of Satan, may reflect the inclinations of a more youthful Baudelaire, while simultaneously portraying a general halting place in the spiritual development of the psyche.

With regard to 'Les litanies de Satan', moreover, a certain distancing from the position that the poem expresses on its surface may well be detectable on a closer reading of its text. If one compares the poem with 'Satanist' expressions of, say, Shelley, or Baudelaire's presumed inspirator Proudhon, it is striking how ambiguous, almost ironic the litany sometimes is. That Satan supports mining and inspires violent and sorrowful visions of love in young girls may more or less fit the bill. But his special protection of somnambulists and drunkards seems almost comical or at least peculiar for a Satan that was usually perceived as a noble Classical hero. That the fallen angel 'consoles frail man that suffers' by teaching him the art of making gun powder might be a reference to revolutionary struggle, but it also sounds more than a bit sarcastic. And what is meant exactly by the exclamation 'Toi qui poses ta marque, ô complice subtil,/Sur le front du Crésus impitoyable et vil' ('You who pose your mark, o subtil accomplice,/On the forehead of the vile Croesus without pity')? It this mark meant to point out the rich man (to have him shot, for instance), or to indicate that he is a true 'child of Satan'?

Even more interesting are the possible interpretations that arise when these ambiguities are compared to the function of Satan as inclined towards the animal and the subconscious in Baudelaire's private notes. Many of the activities that Baudelaire associates with Satan in his litany are connected with the 'subconscious' in one form or another (drunkenness, sleepwalking, sexual desire) or with material, 'lower' gains (as is, quite literary, the case with mining). The remarkable 'prayer' at the end of the poem also allows different readings. What does it mean exactly when one requests to 'repose' with Satan 'beneath' the Tree of Knowledge? Could it be that we must read this 'beneath' not only literally, but also symbolically; e.g., that the prayer expresses the wish to *descend* with Satan into subconscious animalism? Because there *is* another way in which the lost unity of human being can be restored in Baudelaire's scheme: not by moving 'upwards' and painfully approaching the ideal by becoming ever more *conscious* of evil, but by *going down* and strip oneself of one's dignity to become an animal altogether. Baudelaire did not deny that this descent could be joyful; numerous poems in *Les Fleurs du Mal* eloquently evoke this joy.[920] It would not be without consistency, of course, when the 'Litanies de Satan' could be ranged among their number.[921]

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[919] Baudelaire, *Fleurs du Mal*, 237-239.

[920] Cf. 'Invitation à voyage', and many of the erotic poems.

[921] Two prose poems from *Le Spleen de Paris* also depict Satan as offering complete 'earthly' satisfaction: 'L'Étranger' and 'Le Joueur généreux' (cf. Baudelaire, *Le spleen de Paris*, 7 [I] and 53-56 [XXIX]). Both are essentially variations on 'La Voix' from *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

A singular ambiguity and complexity of meaning also characterizes the other, less notorious poem in which Baudelaire seems to make an explicit statement of adoration to the devil. Entitled 'Le Possédé' ('The Possessed'), it first appeared in the second edition of *Fleurs du Mal*, published in 1861. We will quote this poem in full:

Le Possédé

Le soleil s'est couvert d'un crêpe. Comme lui,
Ô Lune de ma vie! emmitoufle-toi d'ombre
Dors ou fume à ton gré; sois muette, sois sombre,
Et plonge tout entière au gouffre de l'Ennui;

Je t'aime ainsi! Pourtant, si tu veux aujourd'hui,
Comme un astre éclipsé qui sort de la pénombre,
Te pavaner aux lieux que la Folie encombre
C'est bien! Charmant poignard, jaillis de ton étui!

Allume ta prunelle à la flamme des lustres!
Allume le désir dans les regards des rustres!
Tout de toi m'est plaisir, morbide ou pétulant;

Sois ce que tu voudras, nuit noire, rouge aurore;
II n'est pas une fibre en tout mon corps tremblant
Qui ne crie: *Ô mon cher Belzébuth, je t'adore!*[922]

(*The Possessed*

The sun is covered in a shroud. Like him,
O Moon of my life, enwrap yourself in shadow
Sleep or smoke as you will; be mute, be sombre,
And loose yourself completely in the abyss of Ennui.

I love you thus! Nevertheless, if you would today,
Like an eclipsed star sorting out from semi-darkness,
Wish to parade yourself in places where Lunacy abounds,
That is fine to me! Charming dagger, leave your sheath!

Light up your pupils with the light of chandeliers!
Light up the fire of desire in the glances of the boorish!
All of you is pleasure to me, morbid or exultant;

Be whatever you want to be: black night, red dawn:
There is no fibre in my body that does not cry out:
'O my dear Beelzebuth, I do adore you!')

Many layers of meaning can be uncovered in this poem. The last exclamation – 'Ô mon cher Belzébuth, je t'adore!' – is not from Baudelaire himself, but quoted from Jacques Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux* (1772), a picardic novel in which a young man invokes the devil in jest during a necromantic ceremony, but flees the scene when the latter appears in all his dark hideousness. The devil then takes on the shape of an androgynous maiden, and when the young man has fallen in love with him/her, he/she discloses her real identity, and asks him to

[922] Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 82-83. The poem was first published in 1859, in the *Revue Française* of 20 January; cf. *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 232.

pronounce, 'as tender as are my feelings for you', the following statement of love: 'My dear Beelzebuth, I do adore you.'[923] In addition, she proclaims that it is essential that her fiancé will know her true appearance, and she transforms into the shape of a demon with a grotesque camel head, laughs frighteningly, and sticks out an enormous tongue to the young man, who in terror seeks shelter underneath the bed.
The narrator of Baudelaire's poem, however, does not flee in terror: instead, he cries out 'with every fibre in his body' that he adores Beelzebuth, whether he shows himself as a charming maiden or a camel headed demon. And the poem does indeed feature some indications that this double-faced demon *is* the devil: the enflamed looks he provokes in the eyes of the boorish, his association with night and darkness and the 'abyss of Ennui'. Is this another poem like 'Les Litanies de Satan', and is the possessed of the title possessed by Satan, by the craving to descend to the lower, animal stage of life? It might be. On the other hand, however, the sun is consistently used as a symbol for the divine in *Fleurs du Mal* (for instance in 'Le Soleil', or the already mentioned 'Sunset of Romanticism'), while the moon, in this poem, is the poet's soul, or inner reflection of the divine. The poem might then describe (and I think it does) the poet's ultimate, complete love for the divinity, or more precisely for his inner 'demon' who oscillates with the appearance and disappearance of the Sun-god, now steeped in the gloom of *Gottesfinsternis*, then again exulting in the spiritual sunbeams of divine ecstasy. It is this demonic/divine spark in man, this poetic genius adored here by the name of Beelzebuth. However, we can also say, with a slight Blakean twist, that it is the deity who is thus called, the ultimate source of both the inner light itself and of its absence. It is this god who gives, in other poems in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, the suffering to the poet that oppresses him but at the same time sanctifies him like Jesus (see for instance 'Bénédiction'). It could therefore well be that this god, and not Satan, is called a demon here, but at the same time declared worthy of adoration.

Which conclusions can we draw after this concise review of Baudelaire's work? What is probably most striking in his 'Satanist' texts, in the first place, is the utter ambiguity they exhibit. When read thoroughly, they allow ever deeper layers of interpretation; and it is seldom evident which one of them is the only or even most valid. Taking into account the totality of Baudelaire's writings, his literary and personal development, and his historical background, particularly in Romanticism, we can formulate hypotheses that go beyond the often contradicting surfaces of his texts. But to a much greater extent than with his Romantic predecessors, finding meaning with Baudelaire depends on the particular savour of his words, the *colour* that his choice of expression conveys. With Baudelaire, in other words, we move inevitably from a strictly historical interpretation to a more personal, re-imaginative reading and the border between what we can make probable as a historian and what we infer from his texts as a person becomes increasingly porous. In addition and in connection to this, we cannot simply interpret his utterances as statements of personal conviction. While Baudelaire emphasized that poetry should be veritable, i.e. a true reflection of personally experienced psychological realities, this does not necessarily imply that they constitute their author's dictum about the cosmos. This may be a truism for every literary scholar; but in fact we can see a marked difference here with earlier Romantic Satanists like Blake, Shelley, Hugo, and even Byron, whose work, however rich in complexity and difficulties of interpretation, can be read with some confidence as an expression of their personal views at the moment of writing.

This does not mean that we are left completely in the inescapable drift-sand of the personal. A few distinct tendencies can be marked out in Baudelaire's treatment of Satan and his divine rival. In the first place, the *sexual* is explicitly connected to the Satanic by

[923] Jacques Cazotte, *Le diable amoureux, et autres écrits fantastiques* (Paris: Flammarion 1974), 125: 'Mon cher Béelzébuth, je t'adore…'

Baudelaire; and this is not meant as a compliment. While the Romantic Satanists and their successors had embarked, as we have shown, upon a hesitant revaluation of the sexual, the bodily, and the natural, using Satan in this context as a positive symbol of emancipation, Baudelaire, although starting out from the same Romantic roots, completely reverses this appreciation. The 'natural' is negative for him, and sex ultimately degradation. Satan, at least in the personal notes he left, thus becomes a symbol for the human tendency to degrade itself. Baudelaire here prefigures attitudes that would appear with many fin de siècle authors, as we will see in the next chapter. At the same time, he closely approaches the 'traditional' Christian association of Satan with lust, at least on the surface, even though his trajectory to arrive here is very specific for his own position in the history of European culture and literature.

Baudelaire's ambiguity manifests itself here as well, however, as some of his better poems consist of a celebration of eroticism that do not exactly strike the reader as if they were composed with repulsion. In fact, it had been these poems that had brought down legal repercussion upon the publication of *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Whatever their broader framework of meaning, Baudelaire was quite frank and unabashed in his evocation of the 'joy of descending'.

Another tendency that has become evident in the preceding pages is the apparent ease with which Baudelaire plays with the names and attributes of religious persona. The divinity is here depicted as the origin and/or *telos* of human idealism and spirituality, there as a cruel tyrant who laughs when his own son is hammered to the cross, in yet another poem adored as a double-faced Beelzebuth. Some of these contradictions resolve themselves upon closer reading. 'Le reniement de saint Pierre' describes the mood of revolt against human suffering, while the narrator of 'Le Possédé' understands that both sides of the deity deserve veneration – suffering only marks out the victim as a chosen one and allows him or her to transcend his animality by the acute tension it reveals between material and the ideal. Yet however pseudo-catholic their intent, these variations predominantly betray an extremely free deployment of the hallowed names of traditional religion. In the same way, the 'satanic' is used as etiquette for the 'lower' part of reality that could be considered evil, while elsewhere, Satan 'after the manner of Milton' is called the perfect embodiment of beauty.

It is to Romantic Satanism that we must look for earlier examples of such a creative reworking of traditional myth. Baudelaire both continues the project of the Romantic Satanists and reacts upon it. He can do so because he shares – at least at the time of *Les Fleurs du Mal* – the basic outlook of the Romantics. Like them, he does not believe in the literal existence of the demons and deities of yore; like them, the true manifestation and source of the divine is located inside humanity for him, in the human self-consciousness or imagination, while the location of the anti-divine, the Satanic, must also be primarily sought within man.[924] This might be why Baudelaire could write in one of his notebooks that even 'if God would not exist, religion would still be Holy and *Divine*.'[925] The essential thing, in religion as well as art, is man's effort and capability to rise from the merely 'natural' and 'material' to the dignity of consciousness.

One of the meanings of the 'Flowers of Evil' from the title of Baudelaire's book might be precisely this. The flowers, growing upwards to the light of the divine sun, represent the human tendency to transcend itself, even though they spring from the 'evil' humus of physical existence. That Baudelaire's interest might be in this, and not so much in 'evil' in the traditional moral sense, is indicated by the last lines of the poem which concludes *Les Fleurs du Mal* in its second edition, 'Le voyage'. No matter how much one travels, the poem tells, the world here below remains essentially the same: only when one sets sail with death, there is

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[924] Emmanuel, *Baudelaire*, 120.

[925] Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes*, 7 [Fusées, I]: 'Quand même Dieu n'existerait pas, la Religion serait encore Sainte et *Divine*.'

a possibility one might find something that goes beyond the 'boring spectacle' of earthly existence.

> Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau,
> Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe?
> Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du *nouveau*![926]
>
> (We want to plunge, so fierce this fire burns our brain,
> Into the depths of the abyss; hell or heaven, what does it matter?
> Into the depths of the Unknown, in order to find something *new*!)

[926] Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 263.

Chapter III
Huysmans & Consorts

On an early afternoon in January 1893, six young gentlemen met on the Pré Catalan in Paris. While the winter sun shone on the lawns and ladies on horseback interrupted their cavalcade to look on, two of them removed their waistcoats, took up swords, and set out to skirmish, their blades clattering and flashing in the green tranquillity of the park. A duel was going on, so much was clear. And although duelling was by no means an unusual sight in France at this time, the *cause d'honneur* that brought the contestants to the field made this duel extraordinary even to contemporary standards. The two duellists were Gérard Encausse (1865-1916), better known as Papus, and Jules Bois (1868-1943) – both self-styled experts on occultism. Even more unusual were the grievances over which they were crossing swords: they concerned allegations of practicing Satanism and murder by magical means.[927]

How did it happen that two French gentlemen fought a duel over the issue of Satanism in the last years of the nineteenth century? What was the background to this remarkable occurrence? In this chapter, we will uncover the story behind this bizarre duel. We will take a long round-about route to do so, however – a route that will take us, amongst others, to gentlemen-magicians, schismatic neo-Catholic sects, ladies of doubtful reputation, and a self-proclaimed descendant of fallen angels. In the process, we will attempt to answer one essential question: were 'genuine' religious Satanists active in the fin de siècle? Do we have reason to think that a genuine, actually practised Satanism formed the background to this duel? If so, what was its nature; if not, what are we looking at instead? Of key importance with regard to these questions, and with regard to our story in general, will be a man and a book that are crucial to any discussion of nineteenth-century Satanism: Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907) and his novel *Là-Bas*, or 'Down There'.[928]

'Down There'

On 17 February 1891, roughly two years before Papus and Bois crossed swords on the Pré Catalan, the first instalment of Huysmans' feuilleton *Là-Bas* appeared in the *Écho de Paris*.[929] The work had been announced by the daily journal as the 'first survey of contemporary Satanism made after nature and based on authentic documents'. 'However strange this account may seem, Mr. Huysmans guarantees its absolute veracity; he requests us also to

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[927] For a description of the duel, including weather conditions, see Jules Bois, *Le monde invisible* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, s.a.), 30. More sources can be found in the references at the end of this chapter.

[928] Huysmans and the historical figures and episodes featuring in this chapter have been the subject of numerous publications. With regard to the history of Satanism, particularly useful *comptes-rendus* can be found in Frick, *Die Satanisten*, 2:155-229 (with many original documents quoted); Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 100-142; McIntosh, *Éliphas Lévi*, 177-197; Webb, *Occult Underground*, 153-184; Fernande Zayed, *Huysmans: Peintre de son époque* (Paris: Nizet, 1973), 421-465; as well as the biography by Robert Baldick, *The Life of J.-K. Huysmans* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955). Pioneering research in these matters that still has found inadequate reception among Anglophone authors has been done by Pierre Lambert in the 1950s and 1960s; the dispersed articles in which he presented his findings will be referenced at the appropriate places. This chapter is in many ways indebted to his research, not in the least because I was able to verify my findings by consulting the rich collection of source material concerning Huysmans c.s. brought together by Lambert and now kept in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal of the Bibliothèque national de France. I also consulted other primary sources available at the French Bibliothèque nationale, allowing me to present a historical synthesis that strongly relies on original source material.

[929] *Echo de Paris*, 8 (17 Feb. 1891) 2465:2.

declare that the information he gives about today's satanic societies, about the secrets and formulas of the succubate, and on the practices of bewitchment and the Black Mass, were given to him by a former superior of a religious congregation, one of the most erudite of priests and most mysterious of healers of our times.'[930]

It was a remarkable announcement for a remarkable book. A short digest may serve to introduce this key document in the history of modern Satanism. In *Là-Bas*, we follow a writer, Durtal, who sets out to write a novel on Gilles de Rais (1404-1440), the medieval serial killer and alleged Satan worshipper, but gradually comes to discover that Satanism is still very well alive in his own day as well. Much of the novel is taken up by table talk between Durtal, the erudite doctor Des Hermies, the astrologer Gevingey, and the staunchly Roman- Catholic bell ringer Carhaix, four very different characters who share a profound distaste for their own time of 'vulgarisation' and 'Americanisation', coupled with a nostalgic longing for the Middle Ages, when piety was still sincere, craftsmanship unspoiled, and even the torturers more professional and the villains more interesting.

While they are discussing Durtal's project on De Rais one evening, Des Hermies suddenly asks Durtal what he knows about Satanism and black magic in the *modern* world.

'Do you mean now?' Durtal inquires.

'Yes, in the modern world where Satanism is rampant and traces itself back in a direct line to the Middle Ages.'[931]

Upon Durtal's incredulous reaction, Des Hermies maintains that there are still people who invoke the devil and celebrate black Masses, and goes on to explain their organisation and the nature of their activities. The most wide-spread society of organized Satanism, he discloses, is that of the 'Ré-théurgistes optimates', founded in 1855 in America by the poet Longfellow, who styles himself High Priest of Evocative Magic. 'It is split, despite an appearance of unity, into two camps: one aspiring to destroy the universe and reign over the ruins, and the other dreaming simply of imposing a demonic cult on the world, of which it would be the high priest.' At the moment, however, this society is 'pretty much on the wane and perhaps defunct altogether'; although a successor 'is on the way of being formed'.[932]

Apart from these rather shadowy societies, numerous other Satanic circles are active, both great and small, all of which practice the three core elements of the Satanic cult: 1. the casting of spells, 2. incubate and succubate, and 3. the Black Mass, which has as its sole point the consecrating of the host 'to put it to unspeakable use'.[933] The adherents of these Satanist circles are recruited from the richer classes ('that explains why these scandals are hushed up if ever the police do discover them'). As only a properly invested priest can enact the transubstantiation necessary for the blasphemous ritual, its celebrants necessarily derive from the clergy, and once again mainly from the higher echelons of the hierarchy: 'missionary superintendents, convent confessors, prelates and abbesses, and in Rome, from the highest dignitaries.'[934]

Without doubt the most redoubtable of these sacrilegious clerics, so Durtal hears from Des Hermies and Gevingey, is the mysterious Canon Docre, the master of Satanism who feeds

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[930] *Echo de Paris*, 8 (13 Feb. 1891) 2461:1: 'la première étude qui ait été faite d'après nature et d'après des documents authentiques, sur le satanisme contemporain […]. Si étranges qui puissent sembler ces récits, M. Huysmans en garantit l'absolue véracité; il nous prie de déclarer aussi que les renseignements qu'il donne sur les sociétés sataniques contemporaines, sur les secrets et les formules du succubat, sur les pratiques de l'envoûtement et de la messe noire, ils le tient d'un ancien supérieur de communauté religieuse, d'un des prêtres les plus érudits, d'un des thaumaturges les plus mystérieux de ce temps.'

[931] J.-K. Huysmans, *Là-Bas: A Journey into the Self*, trans. Brendan King (Sawtry: Dedalus, 2009), 64. All quotations from *Là-Bas* will be from this translation, unless otherwise noted.

[932] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 75-76.

[933] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 74.

[934] This and preceding citation: Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 73.

consecrated hosts to white mice and has an image of the crucified tattooed on the sole of his feet, 'so he can walk over the Saviour all the time'.[935] 'He celebrates [the black Mass] with despicable men and women; he's also openly accused of obtaining inheritances by insidious means and of causing inexplicable deaths.'[936] Gevingey recounts how he once spent the night in a room belonging to Docre and was 'attacked' by a succubus in broad daylight. Although he could ward off the danger by a 'spell of deliverance', he suffered from after-effects of such intensity that he had to take recourse to 'Dr. Johannès', an erudite exorcist unjustly banned by the Church, and the only one in France who is spiritually up to Docre.

The story of the book reaches its culmination with Durtal's final personal encounter with Canon Docre and contemporary Satanism. He comes into contact with these worshippers of Satan through a love-affair with a woman. Since the beginning of his probing into Satanism, he has started to receive letters from an unknown lady. Although initially reluctant (woman being the 'breeding-ground of unhappiness and boredom'), he eventually succumbs to her advances.[937] The unknown lady turns out to be Madame Chantelouve, wife of a well-known Catholic historian, and although at first glance she seems to be just another lonely woman looking for some love and tenderness, Durtal soon begins to notice some strange things about her. At their first meeting, for instance, Madame Chantelouve confesses that she has already made love to him on numerous occasions – by way of an incubus that looks like him and that can be summoned at will by her. When Durtal, by now much intrigued, finds out by chance that she is in contact with Canon Docre, he inveighs her to take him to a black Mass. After much hesitation, Madame Chantelouve agrees. Durtal has to sign a written declaration to the purport that everything he will say and write on the subject of the Black Mass is 'pure invention' and the product of his imagination. After this preliminary precaution, he is allowed to witness a Satanic Mass.[938]

The ceremony is held in the chapel of an old Ursuline convent. A short man with rouged cheeks and painted lips opens the door – causing Durtal to wonder if he has fallen into a 'den of Sodomites'.[939] In the dimly lit chapel behind, nothing suggests anything out of the ordinary, except for the fact that the church altar is topped by an obscene figure of the Christ, showing an erect male member thrusting out from a tuft of horsehair. Male and female attendants are hidden in the shadows, talking to each other in low, murmuring voices. Then, black tapers are lit, and Canon Docre enters the room. He is wearing a scarlet head dress with two bison horns on top of it, as well as a red chasuble on which a red triangle is depicted, with in its centre a black ram 'thrusting out its horns'. Burning censors are distributed which exhale a mixture of 'fragrances pleasing to Satan': rue, henbane, thorn-apple, myrtle, and dried nightshade. The women envelop themselves in the odorous smoke: as they breathe in the perfume, they start to unfasten their dresses and 'heave lascivious sighs'.

At that moment, Canon Docre, who is naked underneath his vestments, kneels down and starts a lengthy prayer to Satan:

> Master of disorder, Bestower of Crime's Blessings, Lord of magnificent sins and noble vices, Satan, it is you we worship, God of reason, God of Justice.
> Superadmirable legate of false fears, you welcome the beggarliness of our tears. You save family honour by aborting wombs impregnated through the thoughtlessness of a good orgasm, you incite expectant mothers to miscarry, and your obstetrics spare those children who die before they are born, the sufferings of age and the pains of failure!

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[935] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 207.
[936] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 146.
[937] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 95.
[938] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 241.
[939] Description of the Black Mass from Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 246-255.

> Sustainer of the exasperated poor, Restorer of the vanquished, it is you who endows them with hypocrisy, with ingratitude and with pride, in order that they can defend themselves against the attacks of God's children, the Rich!
> Sovereign of contempt, Reckoner of humiliations, Treasurer of long-standing hatreds, you alone fertilise the mind of the man crushed by injustice, you breathe into him ideas of premeditated vengeance, of deliberate wrong-doing, you incite him to murder, you grant him an exuberant joy in the reprisals he carries out, a righteous intoxication in the tortures he inflicts and the tears of which he is the cause!
> The Hope of virile members and the Anguish of barren wombs, Satan, you never demand useless proofs of chaste loins or extol the madness of fasts and siestas, you alone grant the carnal supplications and petitions of poor, greedy families. You convince mothers to prostitute their daughters, to sell their sons, you encourage sterile and forbidden loves, you are the Support of shrill Neuroses, the Founder of Hysterias, the blood-stained Vessel of Rape![940]

After this invocation of the dark god, Docre addresses the Christ, roaring out in a 'clear voice full of hate': 'And you, you, who, in my capacity as Priest, I compel, whether you will it or not, to descend into this host, to incarnate yourself in this bread, Jesus, Worker of Deceit, Thief of Respect, Usurper of Affection, listen! Since the day you emerged from the prophetic womb of the Virgin, you have broken all your commitments, lied about your promises; centuries have wept, waiting for you, a fugitive God, a dumb God. […] You have forgotten the Vow of Poverty you preached and became a Vassal in thrall to the Banks. You have seen the weak squeezed dry by the Press of Profit, you have heard the death rattle of the timid wasted by famine and of women disembowelled for a piece of bread, and you have replied, through your Chancery of Simoniacs, through your representatives in commerce and through your Popes, you sacristy shyster, you God of big business! […] We want to drive in your nails, to press down on your crown of thorns, to draw the blood of suffering from your dry wounds. And this we can and will do, by violating the peace of your Body, you Profaner of bountiful vices, you Epitome of idiotic purities, accursed Nazarene, a do-nothing King, a coward of a God!'[941]

Women now fall into hysterics as altar bells are rung to announce that the ceremony is nearing its apotheosis. 'One of the altar boys kneeled in front of [Docre], his back to the altar. A shiver ran down the priest's spine. Solemnly, but with a quivering voice, he recited: *Hoc est enim corpus meum*. Then, after the consecration, instead of kneeling before the Sacred Body, he turned to face his congregation and showed himself, haggard, with full erection, dripping with sweat.'[942] The soaked fragments of the host are thrown into the room by the Canon, where the women fling themselves upon it, tearing off wet fragments and writhing over each other in their attempts to violate it. Meanwhile a raging Docre keeps distributing more hosts, chewing on them and spewing them out, wiping himself with them, while the altar boys continue 'to pay homage to the nudity of the Pontiff'. 'It was like a padded cell in a lunatic asylum, a monstrous steam-room of prostitutes and mad-women. Then, while the altar boys coupled with the men, the mistress of the house, skirts tucked up, got up unto the altar, grabbing Christ's naked member in one hand, and directing the chalice between her legs with the other. In the depth of the chapel, in the shadows, a little girl, who up until then had not stirred, suddenly bent over and howled like a bitch in heat.'[943]

At this point, Durtal can no longer contain himself and flees the scene. He finds Madame Chantelouve sniffing up the smell of sex and Satanic incense close to the priest, and drags her out into the street. Under the pretext that she needs a glass of water, however, she succeeds in

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[940] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 251-252.
[941] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 252-253.
[942] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 253; translation slightly modified.
[943] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 255.

luring him into the squalid rooms of a café nearby, where she 'took him by treason and obliged him to desire her'.[944] After they have had sex, Durtal discovers fragments of mutilated hosts on the sheets. Although he is not at all sure about the doctrine of the Bodily Presence, he realizes that in the end, he as well has taken part in the defilement of the host. Disgusted, he takes his leave, with the firm intention of breaking off with his 'Satanizing' mistress forever.

Huysmans discovers Satanism

This, in short, was the story that *Là-Bas* had to tell about Satanism. Partly because of the way it was announced, the novel is and was widely understood as an authentic piece of thinly veiled autobiography. Durtal, so much is clear, can surely be understood as an alter ego of Huysmans himself. Yet what was fiction in Huysmans' book and what fact? Does *Là-Bas* really present us with a genuine description of nineteenth-century religious Satanism? How did Huysmans discover his hidden cult of Satanists? Where did his information on this subject originate? Answering these question will learn us a lot about nineteenth century Satanism – and might also clarify the circumstances that incited two gentlemen-occultists to have a swordfight in a Parisian park on matters concerning devil-worship.

Lá-bas opened with an extensive discussion of contemporary literature; and we will start our trajectory here as well. Much had changed in the domain of literature since the Romantics had rediscovered Satan. Romanticism and its offshoots had fallen in discredit and had been replaced by a new kind of literature, with Émile Zola (1840-1902) as its most famous representative. Called naturalism, or sometimes realism, it did not wander into vast cosmologies or ascend the winding staircases of the mysterious and the ideal, but sought to describe the life of ordinary, mostly lower class people, and demonstrate how their behaviour was determined by scientifically verifiable facts like heredity and *milieu*.[945] In this respect, literature merely reflected what was going on in society at large. The latter half of the nineteenth century saw the rise of a positivism and science that preached an almost religious belief in the accomplishments of science. This extended to the domain of the psychological and the spiritual as well: had the experiments of Dr. Charcot, and others, not pointed out that physiological factors were the ultimate cause for psychopathological and para-psychological states?[946] Man was an animal ruled by instinct, only slightly more complicated than the beasts in the fields.

When George-Charles Huysmans took the pen name of Joris-Karl Huysmans (in commemoration of his Dutch origin) and began to publish his first ventures into literature, he was widely regarded as a follower of Zola. His debut as a novelist, *Marthe, histoire d'une fille* (1876), had told the story of a prostitute; and in subsequent novels, he had explored the life of bachelors and working girls. In addition, he had participated in *Les soirées de Médan* (1880), the most famous collective creative outburst of the *groupe Zola*, contributing a short novella that told the story of the Franco-Prussian war from the perspective of a dysentery-stricken soldier desperately seeking the peace and comfort of a private closet.[947]

Huysmans' latent dissatisfaction with the Massive reductionism of Naturalism became apparent, however, when he published *À Rebours* ('Against Nature') in 1884. Described as a 'manual for the onanism of the imagination' by a contemporary author, this book would become one of the founding works of the Decadent Movement in late nineteenth century

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[944] My translation, from J.-K. Huysmans, *Là-Bas* (Paris: Plon, s.a.), 381.

[945] Bruno Gelas, 'Le satanisme et le roman Là-Bas de Huysmans,' in *Le Défi Magique II: Satanisme, sorcellerie*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Martin and Massimo Introvigne (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1994), 271-277.

[946] Cf. LaChapelle, *Investigating the Supernatural*, 59-85.

[947] J.-K. Huysmans, *Marthe: Histoire d'une fille* (Paris: Le Cercle du Livre, 1955); Émile Zola, and others, *Les Soirées de Médan* (Paris: Georges Charpentier, 1880).

literature, assuring its author a certain amount of international renown.[948] The hero of the novel, Jean des Esseintes, is in every aspect the inversion of the standard naturalistic protagonist. Instead of a butcher apprentice or a factory worker, he is an affluent nobleman; and instead of slavishly following his instincts according to the laws of hereditary disposition and animal society, he is someone who consciously strives for the exceptional, the artificial and the unusual – in short, the cultural. Disgusted by modern society in all its aspects, he withdraws into the solitude of his own house, stocked with carefully selected objects of art, precious books (none of them by Zola), and natural flowers purposely chosen for their artificial look. In the end, Des Esseintes' effort at splendid isolation fails: he becomes ill, and the doctor prescribes, to his unspeakable horror, the distraction of society life in the city. Yet the point Huysmans wished to make with *À Rebours* did not fail to get across: to emphasize the value of the exceptional, and to underline the fact that human life was not intrinsically confined to the 'natural', let alone the naturalistic.

For Huysmans, this clearly was more than merely a matter of literature. Naturalism and materialism, with their tendency to explain everything away as a result of animalistic urges 'below the belt', did not only dissatisfy him as a literary modus, but also as philosophy of life. Who could really explain the mysteries of coincidence, of love, even of money? Who could tell what caused the hysteric fits of the women in Dr. Charcot's clinic? Were they possessed because they were hysterical or hysterical because they were possessed?[949] Posing these questions already signalled the inadequacy of naturalism and positivism. Where could answers be found? Huysmans was not only looking for a new literary program, but also for a new metaphysical outlook that would do justice for the mystery of life as he experienced it. He dabbled a bit in spiritualism, but found the pseudo-religious theorizing of its advocates and the vulgarity of its adherents not to his taste. The experiences he witnessed, however, strengthened his belief in the reality of a supernatural.[950]

Huysmans was also looking for a way out from his own times, the opulent Belle Époque that he found shallow, vulgar, and depressing. Like many of the Romantics before him, it was to the Middle Ages that he turned for solace. In France, this predilection for the Middle Ages had had its origins with Romantic authors of an antirevolutionary and royalist disposition, for whom the Middle Ages had symbolized a time of sacred kingship and popular faith unsoiled by the revolutionizing and secularizing tendencies that had arisen with the Enlightenment. This medievalism had been adopted by other Romantics as well, however, who used it as a vehicle for Romantic nationalism and as a kind of inverted mirror image to express their dissatisfaction with (Enlightenment) rationalism and a society dominated by the 'computing faculty'.[951] This 'discomfort with modernity' had lost none of its poignancy in Huysmans'

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[948] Charles Buet, *Grands Hommes en Robe de Chambre* (Paris: Société Libre d'Édition des Gens de Lettres, 1897), 231.

[949] These and foregoing examples paraphrased from Huysmans, *Là-Bas* 27, 149.

[950] J.-K. Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Arij Prins, 1885-1907* (Genève: Droz, 1977), 235 [Letter of [24 January] 1892]; Remy de Gourmont, 'Souvenirs sur Huysmans,' in *Promenades Littéraires: Troisième Série* (Paris: Mercvre de France, 1916), 5-18, here 16-17; Joanny Bricaud, *Huysmans, Occultiste et Magicien: Avec une Notice sur les Hosties Magiques qui servent à Huysmans pour combattre les Envoûtements* (Paris: Bibliothèque Chacornac, 1913), 10-11.

[951] Barbara G. Keller, *The Middle Ages Reconsidered: Attitudes in France from the Eighteenth Century through the Romantic Movement* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), especially 48, 199. The Middle Ages played an important role in the conflict between Romantics and Classicists in French literature and art, during which they were juxtaposed as a source for vernacular, 'national' thoughts and forms, *vis à vis* the 'universal' ideals of Classicism. Similar notions can be found in German and English Romanticism. This predilection for the Middle Ages was not necessarily a 'Reactionary' affair. The French writer Charles Nodier (1780-1844), for example, described the first medieval knights as 'quelques nobles pauvres unis par la nécessité d'une légitime défense, épouvantés par des excès que devoit entraîner la multiplicité des pouvoirs souverains, [qui] prennent en pitié les misères et les larmes du peuple'; later, this beneficial institution had become monopolized by the monarchy, who

days, when the impact of industrialization, secularisation, and political emancipation had only increased.[952] In these circumstances, the Middle Ages, or rather an idealized version of them, could continue to serve as a mythical counterpoint to the bleak realities of the present. In *À Rebours*, Des Esseintes had already found himself irresistible attracted to Roman-Catholicism and the medieval flavour of its art and old music: the book even ended with a not entirely ironic prayer asking for pity upon 'an unbeliever who wants to believe'.[953] Yet it would take a child's faith, *À Rebours* maintained, to be able to believe the absurdities of Roman Catholic dogma or follow its strict moral precepts; a faith neither Des Esseintes nor Huysmans possessed. Apart from that, contemporary Church was only the diluted and corrupted shadow of its predecessor during the glorious Middle Ages. As Huysmans claimed in a rather peculiar aside in *À Rebours*, even the Eucharistic bread itself was not the same anymore: virtually everywhere, the old corn meal had been replaced with potato flour. Thus, even the holiest of the holy had quite literally fallen victim to the Americanisation of the times.

In *À Rebours*, however, the first dim outlines appeared of an *alternative path*: a path 'as old as the Church' that also acknowledged the existence of the unexplainable, yet did not demand 'useless proofs of chaste loins'. In the daydreams of Des Esseintes, this alternative presented itself under the name of Sadism, which for him had a very specific significance: 'the forbidden pleasure of transferring to Satan the homage and the prayers due to God'. Its practice implied an intentional inversion of the precepts of Roman Catholicism, in particular by committing the two sins that form the apogee of wickedness: pollution of the liturgy and sexual orgy. The most complete embodiment of his tendency 'à rebours' could be found in the witches' Sabbath à la Michelet, which comprised 'all obscene practices and all blasphemies of Sadism'.[954]

Huysmans' fascination with medieval 'Satanism' is also attested in another of his publications from this period, a long essay he wrote on erotic art.[955] The major part of this piece was devoted to Félicien Rops (1833-1898), the Belgian artist whose work Huysmans had recently discovered, and especially to Rops' series of pornographic engravings entitled 'Les Sataniques'. Huysmans described Rops as a 'Primitif à rebours' who had completely 'penetrated and summarized Satanism' in his works.[956] Several pages of the essay concerned Rops' depiction of the Black Mass, sprinkled with references to classic demonologists as Jean Bodin, Martin Delrio, Jacobus Sprengerus, and Joseph Görres.[957] Huysmans waxed lyrical,

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exploited it for its own devious purposes (cited in Keller, *The Middle Ages Reconsidered*, 90).

A decent English-language overview of nineteenth-century medievalism in an international perspective seems to be lacking, but two publications in Dutch on this subject deserve mention: Ronald van Kesteren, *Het verlangen naar de Middeleeuwen: De verbeelding van een historische passie* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Wereldbibliotheek, 2004), with pp. 333-378 exclusively devoted to Huysmans, and Peter Raedts, *De Ontdekking van de Middeleeuwen: De geschiedenis van een illusie* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Wereldbibliotheek, 2011).

[952] I have taken the phrase 'discomfort with modernity'from Otto Gerhard Oexle's article 'Das Mittelalter und das Unbehagen an der Moderne: Mittelalterbeschwörungen in der Weimarer Republik und danach,' in *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeichen des Historismus: Studien zu Problemgeschichten der Moderne*. Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenchaft, no. 116 (Götttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 137-162. Although dealing with attitudes towards the Middle Ages during the Weimar Republic, Oexle's analysis in this article seems remarkably apt to Huysmans as well.

[953] J.-K. Huysmans, *A Rebours* (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1919), 294; see also ibidem, 106.

[954] All quotations Huysmans, *A Rebours*, 212-213.

[955] 'Félicien Rops', originally published as 'L'Œuvre érotique de Félicien Rops' in *La Plume*, 15 June 1886; reprinted in *Certains* (Paris: Tresse & Stock, 1889), 76-118.

[956] Huysmans, *Certains*, 92.

[957] Jean Bodin (1530–1596) was a well-known French political writer and demonologist; Martin Delrio (1551-1608) a Spanish Jesuit author who published a work on magic and the occult; Jacobus Sprengerus was, of course, one of the authors of the *Malleus Maleficarium*, and Johann Joseph Görres (1776-1848) a Catholic writer who gave much attention to demonology in his *Christliche Mystik* (1836-1842).

however, when describing an engraving entitled 'Le Calvaire' that showed Mary Magdalene in ecstatic stupor before a crucified, satyr-like Satan with an enormous erection. 'Far from this century, in a time where the materialist arts see nothing but hysterics who are eaten by their ovaries or nymphomaniacs whose brains are beating below their belly, he [Rops] has celebrated, not the woman of today, not the Parisienne, whose coaxing graces and suspect outfitting escapes his expertise – but Woman in her essence and of all times, the venomous and naked Beast, the mercenary of Darkness, the complete slave of the Devil. He has, in a word, celebrated the spirituality of lasciviousness that is Satanism, painted in unsurpassable pages the supernatural of perversity, the netherworld of Evil.'[958]

At the same time that his fascination with Satanism slowly was taking form, Huysmans also started to develop a new vision on literature, the outlines of which he would expound on the first pages of *Là-Bas*. Naturalism was dead, certainly; but it would do no good to 'deny the unforgettable services the Naturalists have rendered to Art' and return to 'the inflated nonsense of the Romantics'. What was needed, he maintained, was to preserve 'the documentary truthfulness, the precision of detail, the rich, sinewy language of Realism', but utilize it to 'drive a well-shaft into the soul' and chant the 'super-natural', the mystical: 'in one word, a spiritual Naturalism that would be noble, more complete, and more formidable'.[959] This was the project Huysmans set out to realize with *Là-Bas*. As a fitting subject for his novel, he first considered Naundorffism, the informal movement smacking of right-wing Catholicism and occultism that had formed itself around an adventurer pretending to be a descendant of Louis XVI.[960] He soon dropped this subject, however, and settled for Satanism. Just like Durtal, the protagonist in his novel, Huysmans set out to discover the remnants of a medieval Satanism that had survived into his own day.

Péladan, Guaita, Papus

For an outsider, the first and most logical place to look for Satanism was the world of occultism and 'modern' magic. This Huysmans proceeded to do: and although he primarily may have intended to 'document' himself for his next book, clearly something more was at stake for him as well. A letter Huysmans sent to his friend Gustav Guiches attested to the personal aspect his explorations may have had. 'I don't want anything of that pigsty of naturalism anymore!' he wrote, 'Now what? What is left? Maybe occultism. Not spiritism! The clownery of the mediums, the wackedness of old ladies that turn tables! No: occultism! Not the 'up above', but the 'underneath', or the 'aside from', or the 'beyond' of reality! Lacking the faith of the Primitive and the first communicant that I would like to have, there still is a mystery that 'demands' me, and that occupies my thoughts.'[961]

Occultism was flourishing in fin-de-siècle Paris. A new generation of occultists had arisen, young men who, according to the ironic description of a contemporary observer, busied themselves with 'studying Hermes-Trismegistos through an autographed fragment of some Éliphas Lévi and drawing pentacles in the public toilets'.[962] Among its most important representatives were three men who will play an important role in this chapter: Joséphin Péladan, Stanislas de Guaita, and Gérard Encausse, better known as Papus.

Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918) was born in an ultra- Catholic, staunchly royalist family in the French provincial town of Lyons. His father published accounts of Roman Catholic

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[958] Huysmans, *Certains*, 117-118.
[959] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 18, 20.
[960] Cf. Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 101-102.
[961] Letter to Gustave Guiches, written after 1887, quoted from Zayed, *Huysmans*, 429.
[962] Letter from Charles Vignier in Jules Huret, *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* (Vanves: Éditions Thot, 1982), 105. For a more general background to the new occultism, see McInthosh, *Éliphas Lévi*, 219, and LaChapelle, *Investigating the Supernatural*, 37-58.

visionaries and propagated the veneration of the seventh wound of Christ (that is, until the ecclesiastical authorities declared this devotion unorthodox); his brother practised as a homeopathic therapist and unsuccessfully tried to obtain a doctor's degree with a thesis on the dangerous effects of voluntary and involuntary loss of semen. It was an environment that nurtured the promise of eccentricity, and Joséphin Péladan would more than live up to this promise.[963] Young Péladan soon moved to Paris, where he wrote his first novel, *La Vice suprême* ('The Supreme Vice'). Published in 1886 (the same year *À Rebours* saw light), this book can be characterized as an exposition of Lévian doctrines in the form of a novel. It featured a magician-hero, Merodack, who obtained mastery over the fluidic forces by a series of sometimes bizarre trials of will ('He even quitted smoking, which proved to be a tough job').[964] This Cabbalist super-hero was flanked by an impeccable, alluring priest, both striving in unison to combat the immorality and decadence of the times. The book proved a considerable success, doubtlessly because of its heady mixture of occultism, fin-de-siècle eroticism, and stinging criticism on the flaws of its time – a set of themes Péladan would continue to exploit in an endless series of follow-ups.

After *La Vice suprême* had brought him fame, esotericism became a life-project for Péladan. When someone discovered for him that the name Péladan was mentioned in the Bible as Baladan, an Assyrian king, he promptly declared himself to be a descendant of Assyrian royalty, adopted the kingly title 'Sâr Merodack', and donned an appropriate attire of flowing robes and patriarchal beard.[965] This made him a well-known figure on the avenues of Paris, and a grateful object of public attention. Behind this operatic façade, however, Péladan entertained an ambitious project. Inspired by Wagner's opera's and the composer's quest for a 'Gesamtkunstwerk', he aspired to form a Roman Catholic esoteric order in which artists of all disciplines cooperated to offer the corrupted *Belle époque* a spiritual antidote. For Péladan, the great Romantic notion of the artist as the builder of a new and more spiritual society still held truth. 'Artist, you are Priest,' he wrote in a publication justifying his artistic program, 'Art is the great Mystery […]. Artist, you are King; Art is the real Empire […] Artist, you are Magician: Art is the great Miracle, she alone provides proof for our immortality.'[966] In the years 1892 to 1897, he succeeded in organizing a series of successful art 'Salons' in which influential Symbolist and Decadent artists as Redon, Rops, Delacroix and Ogier participated, while a young Erik Satie composed a special music score for the first session.[967]

Péladan's Assyrian kingship did not prevent him from styling himself a 'loyal son of the Church'. Catholicism and esotericism had mingled easily in the Lyons milieu from which he sprang, and their complementary nature was never a question him. In the prologue to *Comment on devient Mage* ('How to Become a Magician', 1892), he declared himself perfectly prepared to burn the work with his own hands if 'Peter the infallible' would deem it improper or heterodox.[968] The defence of Catholicism remained his official goal throughout his life – although one wonders whether the Catholic Church was much pleased with this

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[963] Biographical details about Péladan derive almost exclusively from the excellent biography by Christophe Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918): Essai sur une maladie du lyrisme* (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1993).

[964] Joséphin Péladan, *La vice suprême (La décadence latine: Éthopée I)* (1896 ; reprint, Genève: Editions Slatkine, 1979), 163. The influence of Lévi permeates the whole book, but is particularly explicit on p. 160 & 240.

[965] Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*, 143.

[966] Sar Péladan, *L'Art idéaliste & mystique: Doctrine de l'Ordre et du Salon Annuel de Rose + Croix* (Paris: Chamuel, 1894), 17-18: 'Artiste, tu es prêtre: l'art est le grand Mystère […]. Artiste, tu es roi: l'Art est l'empire véritable […]. Artiste, tu es mage: l'Art est le grand miracle, il prouve seul notre immortalité.'

[967] Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*, 213, 226-235. After the first Salon, Satie broke away from the Sâr to found his own church.

[968] Sar Mérodack J. Péladan, *Comment on devient Mage* (Paris: Chamuel, 1892), xiii; see also 129: 'Quiconque ne va pas à la messe, n'entrera pas au temple du mystère. […] Sois catholique pour devenir mage, et n'oublie jamais que si tes maîtres sont parmi les morts, tu as une supérieur parmi les vivants, Sa Sainteté le Pape.'

eccentric defender, who, in his self-assumed dignity of cardinal extraordinaire, proceeded to excommunicate the wife of Rothschild because she had demolished the former living quarters of Balzac, and in addition urged the ecclesiastical authorities to take immediate action against bull fights: primarily while it was well-known, he claimed, that Spanish women in the audience experienced 'several complete orgasms in a row' while watching the cruel spectacle.[969] In a handbook for female occultists, he induced ladies from the *beau monde* to use their sexual charms to further the Cause of Art & Catholicism; in another book, he envisioned 'curing' a club of staunch lesbians by dousing them with the highly aphrodisiacal 'plante attractive' of Abraham van Helsing, thus igniting a massive but healthily heterosexual orgy.[970] For the Sâr, there was no contradiction here. He did not wish to question the role of the Church as upholder of strict morality, but simply claimed his writings targeted a different, 'decadent' audience that could not be reached by the clergy anymore. Moreover, he maintained, prudishness in prose was something for protestant Puritans: Catholicism had always favoured firm expression.[971]

For all these pious assurances, it is a safe bet that *La Vice suprême* did more to stimulate interest in occultism than in Catholicism. This was the effect, in any case, that the novel had on the marquis Stanislas de Guaita (1861-1897). De Guaita sprang from a family of wealthy French nobility in Lorraine and had come to Paris on the pretext of studying chemistry. Initially, he had considered poetry as a career, and he published two volumes of verse in the neo-Romantic tradition of Baudelaire, *La Muse noire* (1883) and *Rosa Mystica* (1885).[972] Although best characterized as 'neither excellent nor too mediocre', his poems clearly attested to the same aversion to the prevailing spirit of positivism and spiritual materialism that Huysmans had also come to feel.[973] Yet in between the lines, they also contained indications that Guaita's belief in the Romantic Gospel of Art was wavering. In the eponymous opening poem of *Rosa Mystica*, for instance, he called the 'mystical rose' of poetry a 'splendid illusion' and the Ideal a deception: and while he declared his continuing devotion to the 'lying charms of my mystic Dream' as the only option to make life worthwhile, the reader gets the distinct impression that these rhetorics mask a certain faintness of conviction.[974] In these circumstances, *La Vice suprême* struck him like a thunderbolt. Here he was presented with a path that did not oblige him to live with his 'eyes closed', as he had written in *Rosa Mystica*; and the mysticism and magic he had attributed to poetry in the preface to this work – the ability 'to divinate the unknown, to penetrate into the impenetrable, and to fill up emptiness' – could now suddenly be given practical and tangible form.[975] Péladan's novel prompted Guaita to reread Éliphas Lévi, whose works henceforth became the lodestone of his thought. It also prompted him to contact Péladan personally, which resulted in a lively correspondence

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[969] Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*, 217.

[970] Joséphin Péladan, *Comment on devient Fée* (1893; reprint, s.l.: Paréiasaure, 1996), 58, a.o.; the scene of sexual therapy is included in *La Gynandre* (1891); see Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*, 210.

[971] Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*, 162.

[972] Stanislas de Guaita, *La Muse Noire* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1883), and *Rosa Mystica* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1885).

[973] Quote from Bois, *Le monde invisible*, 22. Guaita's (neo)Romantic sentiments becomes evident in poems as 'La Disgrâce de la Lyre' (*Muse noire*, 9-11 ; 'l'humanité stupide a renié ses dieux…'), 'Le Progrès' (Ibidem, 75-77), 'Positivisme' (Ibidem, 137-138 ; 'le Positivisme a triomphé du Songe'), as well as in the title poem of *Rosa Mystica* and the extensive preface of the latter publication, in which Guaita explicitly gives tribute to Hugo, Théophile Gautier, and Baudelaire. Significantly, the mysticism of the title is defined on page 3 of this preface as 'l'amour de nos cœurs pour les songes de nos cerveaux'.

[974] Guaita, *Rosa Mystica*, 65-66.

[975] Guaita, *Rosa Mystica*, 66, 3: 'de deviner l'inconnu, de pénétrer l'imprénétrable et de peupler le vide'. On the same page, Guaita had written about the poet: 'Vous êtes donc magicien, et la rose mystique ira d'elle-même, pour peu que vous le vouliez, fleurir en votre jardin.'

and a close friendship.[976] The marquis abandoned his career in Letters – which up to then had not seemed promising anyhow – and embarked on a full-time study of the occult. Stacking his ancestral *chateau* in Lorraine with an impressive and expensive collection of occult rarities, he immersed himself in books during the night, keeping himself afoot with caffeine, cocaine, morphine, and last but not least his excellent wine cellar.[977] These nocturnal studies would result in his magnum opus *Le serpente de la Génese* ('The Serpent of Genesis'), a mammoth work intending to dissolve the mystery of cosmic evil once and for all.[978]

When visiting the capital, Guaita mingled extensively in esoteric circles. Thus he met Gérard Encausse, a medical student who had likewise grown impatient with the all-too-arrogant positivism of the time, had discovered Éliphas Lévi, and had subsequently started to publish about occultism under the pen name 'Papus' (the genius of Medicine in the *Nuctemeron*, a book on magic attributed to Apollonius of Tyana and edited in French by Lévi).[979] The two men had met at a meeting of Isis, the recently founded French branch of Blavatsky's Theosophical Society.[980] Both Guaita and Papus, however, soon grew discontented with the esotericism that was *de rigeur* at Isis, which in the wake of Madame Blavatsky was taking an ever more 'Eastern' coloration. Like Rudolf Steiner later on, they wanted to honour the distinct esoteric development of the Christian West and continue the pure Levian tradition of occultism.[981] At this time, the two young disciples of Éliphas Lévi were still only students. Papus, however, was an organizer by nature. He broke away from Isis and the Theosophical Society and set up a study centre for occultism at Rue de Trévisse 29 with fellow-student Lucien Chamuel, which they equipped with a bookshop, a library, a lecture room, and a practice room for magical experiments. In addition to this, he resuscitated the all but defunct order of Martinism, a school of Catholic-esoteric mysticism that had fallen into disarray. He used its name to give an aura of antiquity to what was in essence a thoroughly modern organisation, aiming to give its members a solid education in esotericism that could stand on a par with 'secular' science. It soon sprang branches all over France and the rest of the world.[982] Last but not least, Guaita and Papus resurrected – not for the first or the last time – the legendary Order of the Rosicrucians.[983] In 1888, they called into life the 'Ordre Cabbalistique

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[976] Stanislas de Guaita, *Lettres inédites de Stanislas de Guaita au Sâr Joséphin Péladan*, ed. Edmund Bertholet and Emile Dantinne (Neuchâtel: Éditions Rosicruciennes, 1952), 51-53. In later letters, Guaita would defend Lévi to Péladan, who was critical of Lévi's presumed pantheism; see ibidem, 71-73.

[977] Bois, *Le monde invisible*, 23. Guaita's addiction to morphine is also attested in his letters (see Guaita, *Lettres inédites au Sâr Joséphin Péladan*, 96, 115-116), while two of the best poems in *Rosa Mystica* deal with the 'flowers of oblivion' as well (cf. 'Notre-Dame d'Oubli,' *Rosa Mystica*, 95-98, and 'Les fleurs vénéneux', ibidem, 101-105). For Guaita's library, see Guaita, *Lettres inédites au Sâr Joséphin Péladan*, 25; 2227 works were put on sale after de Guaita's death.

A scholarly biography of Guaita is still conspicuously lacking. The obituary of his friend Maurice Barrès, *Un rénovateur de l'occultisme, Stanislas de Guaita (1861-1898)* (Paris: Chamuel, 1898), does not offer much in terms of factual information; André Billy, *Stanislas de Guaita* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1971), is also unsatisfying. Oswald Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita: Souvenirs de son Secrétaire* (Paris: Éditions du Symbolisme, 1935), is indispensable as a source text, but uncritical laudatory of the French occultist.

[978] Two tomes of this work would see print: *Première Septaine (Livre I): Le Temple de Satan* and *Première Septaine (Livre II): La Clef de la Magie Noire*. I have consulted the edition published in Paris by Hector & Henri Durville, 1915-1920.

[979] Biographical details on Papus are mostly taken from the biography by his son Philippe Encausse, *Sciences occultes ou 25 années d'occultisme occidental: Papus, sa vie, son œuvre* (Paris: Éditions Ocia, 1949). As with Guaita, a scholarly biography of Papus is still wanting.

[980] Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan* 121.

[981] This point is made very explicit in Papus*, Traité élémentaire de science occulte* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1926), 183-187.

[982] Encausse, *Sciences occultes*, 57-107.

[983] Encausse, *Sciences occultes*, 109-120. On the earlier history of the Rosicrucians, see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1:90-92, 1:838-844, and Horst Möller, 'Die Gold- und Rosenkreuzer: Struktur, Zielsetzung und Wirkung einer anti-aufklärischen Geheimgesellschaft,' in *Geheime Gesellschaften*, ed. Peter Christian Ludz.

de la Rose + Croix'. Papus, Guaita, and Chamuel all took seats in the 'Supreme Council' of the new order; they were soon joined by Péladan, who also happened to claim some sort of Rosicrucian initiation for himself (possibly with some right this time).[984]

Clearly, occultism in Paris was experiencing a flurry of activity. Huysmans was not altogether unfamiliar with the main characters of this new, blooming subculture. He had met Péladan in the salon circuit and had sent the Sâr a not unappreciative note after reading *La Vice suprême*.[985] In addition, he had had an affair with Péladan's former mistress, Henriette Maillat – it was this affair, as a matter of fact, that Huysmans would describe in *Là-Bas*, quoting Maillat's love letters verbatim.[986] By frequenting the bookstore on Rue de Trévisse, Huysmans soon became acquainted with most of the other major characters of Parisian occultism. Yet for Satanism, 'pollution of liturgy', and re-enactments of the medieval witches' Sabbath, he was on the wrong track here. With regard to the complex of the mythological figures that can be captioned under the name of Satan, the new Rosicrucians strictly adhered to the triple scheme of Éliphas Lévi. Guaita can be regarded as speaking for all of them when he propounds the classic Levi interpretation of the devil in *Le Serpent de la Gènese*, distinguishing three levels: symbol of evil in a vulgar sense, astral light or life force in an esoteric sense, and the 'mysterious attraction of the Self to the Self' on yet another esoteric level.[987] If anything, Satan was placed slightly more 'on the bad side' by the marquis: although lip service is paid to his role as 'universal dispenser of elementary life', Satan-Pantheos is almost exclusively mentioned in a negative way, as a 'formidable and multifarious' force that 'specifies itself under a thousand faces to defile every altar'. Significantly, Lévi's Baphomet has suddenly become the 'He-Goat of Goetia' (or Black Magic) with Guaita.[988]
Surprisingly, the only member of the trio which gave some slight indication of Satanist leanings was Péladan, the valiant champion of Catholicism. While visiting Palestine on a later date, he would scandalise the guests of a Franciscan guesthouse by pledging his love for Satan, describing him as 'the most perfect creature on the spiritual plane' and 'Jesus-Prometheus'.[989] In *Comment on devient artiste* ('How to Become an Artist', 1894), the Sâr would even declare himself a descendant of the angels of Genesis 6,2, who had fallen from grace because of their love for the daughters of Man. Apparently, he meant the latter not solely in a metaphorical sense, with Satan as the ancestor of all artists and mystics who strive to the ideal, but also in a quite literally, the true artist being an 'arist', a descendant of a race of supermen engendered by the fallen angels and still among us as men of special inspiration.[990]

Wolfenbütteler Studien zur Aufklärung V/1 (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1979), 153-202.

[984] Péladan claimed to have been initiated by his older brother Adrien; see Edmund Bertholet's introduction to Guaita, *Lettres inédites au Sâr Joséphin Péladan*, 39.

[985] Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*, 134. This might be the right moment to point out the striking similarities in program between Péladan's *Vice suprême* and Huysmans' *Là-Bas*, two novels that both confront the decay of their times with an alternative world of Catholicism and occultism. The possibility must not be excluded that Huysmans had been inspired by Péladan.

[986] Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 139.

[987] Guaita, *Le Serpent de la Genèse*, 1:24-25.

[988] Guaita, *Serpent de la Genèse* 1:21, 67, 51, 572; see also 2:138, as well as Péladan, *Comment on devient Fée*, 24, and Papus, *Le Diable et l'Occultisme* (Paris: Chamuel, 1895), 34-35: 'Dieu est l'Esprit dont l'antithèse dernière est la Matière. Le Diable est ce qui donne à la Matière la prééminence sur l'Esprit.'

[989] Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*, 327. The unsympathetic reactions of the other guests and the Franciscan caretaker made the Sâr fear for his life – he barricaded the door of his room and slept with his pistol under his cushion, checking out early next morning. It must be added, however, that Péladan does not seem to have been free of a slight touch of paranoia

[990] Sar Mérodack J. Peladan, *Comment on devient artiste: esthétique* (Paris: [Chamuel], 1894), 19, 43, 38-40: 'Toute vision du ciel, religion, et art vient des daïmons et non de l'homme. Les fils de l'au-delà seuls les perçoivent: eux seuls le peuvent montrer aux hommes. Mais comme Sathan leur père perdit sa gloire pour achèver son œuvre sur les hommes, ainsi les daïmons doivent enseigner tout ce qui exhausse l'être et

Here, as elsewhere, Péladan clearly was indebted to the ideas of the Romantic Satanists, and it is not surprising when one sees 'Satan-Prometheus' appear in one of his novels as a 'beautiful Androgyne chained to a rock' that could have walked in straight from a George Sand novel.[991] Despite all this, however, the ultra-Catholic Sâr who subjected his manuals of magic to papal scrutiny remained an unlikely candidate for Satanism.

Worship of Satan thus was hard to find with these fin-de-siècle occultists. Even less were Huysmans' chances of discovering Sabbath-like sexual orgies in this esoteric subculture. Pèladan might describe with obvious relish a wide variety of perversions in his novels, his magician-heroes always walked through the sexual carnage with unflinching minds. In *Comment on devient mage*, he advised, before anything, self-control.[992] Guaita took the same line in *Serpent de la Gènese*. While celibacy was an unnatural and undesirable condition for a magician (except for certain specific ritual purposes), it was essential to command the flesh instead of being commanded by it. In this manner, the magician might be able to 'free himself of the sexual yoke'.[993] Only in a small footnote to his enormous work does Guaita acknowledge the possibility of using sex in ritual, while prudently leaving these 'Arcanæ' under the 'triple veil' of esoteric secrecy. [994] Of foremost importance to Péladan, Papus, and Guaita was the control of will they adopted from Lévi. This was what enabled the adept to control the elementary universal force, which is the essence of magic. In words that seem to foreshadow Freud and Jung, Guaita stated that 'Satan-Pantheos' continually proposes a 'retrogression to instinct' which leads ultimately to 'the apotheosis of the Unconscious'.[995] The Sabbath of the Witches was a prominent example of this and clearly belonged to the domain of black magic, a 'perversion of the occult' which consisted of putting to action the vital force of the Serpent for purposes of evil. This was the true religion of Satan, a religion of abandon and 'astral drunkenness'[996] In their description of this dark cult, the three occultists closely followed the Levian example and repeated most of the latter's descriptions, including the famous inverted pentagram as a presumed emblem of Satanism.[997]

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l'accomplit.' Compare Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*, 148, 278. Fittingly, *Comment on devient artiste* opened with a dedication to the devil, in which Péladan declared that he 'felt daïmonic blood palpitating' in his veins and expressed the hope that he, too, was a descendant of the fallen angels (see xi-xiii).

[991] Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*, 189; see also 282. The quotation originates from Péladan's novel *Cœur en peine* (1890).

[992] Péladan, *Comment on devient Mage*, 42-43, 153.

[993] Guaita, *Serpent de la Genèse*, 2:542.

[994] Guaita, *Serpent de la Genèse*, 2:542(n).

[995] Guaita, *Serpent de la Genèse*, 1:532n: 'D'après la tradition ésotérique, l'homme terrestre, *Conscience* individuelle, se trouve placé entre deux *Inconscients*: l'*Inconscient supérieur* ou Esprit universel, et l'*Inconscient inférieur* ou instinct collectif. Selon qu'il se met en rapport avec l'un ou l'autre, l'homme reçoit: d'en haut, l'*Inspiration divine*, ou d'en bas, l'*Intuition physique*. Libre donc à chacun de s'assimiler de l'un ou de l'autre breuvage, dans la mesure de sa capacité; mais il ne faut pas plus se noyer ou dissoudre son Moi dans l'Esprit universel que dans l'Instinct collectif. – Au demeurant, l'Esprit universel ne se nomme *Inconscient* (supérieur) que par opposition à la *Conscience* individuelle ; comme on pourrait l'appeler encore *Non-Moi* (supérieur), pour le distinguer du *Moi* individuel. Est-ce à dire qu'il soit dépourvu en soi de conscience ou d'entité? Conclure de la sorte, ce serait jouer sur les mots. – Au cas particulier, il ne s'agit que de l'*Inconscient inférieur*.'

[996] Quotation from Péladan, *Comment on devient Mage*, 223-224; see also Guaita, *Serpent de la Genèse*, 1:171, 2:9, 2:110, and Victor-Émile Michelet, *L'Amour et la Magie* (Paris: Librairie Hermétique, 1909) – an adequate summary of the typical fin de siècle mysoginism of the latter work can be found on p. 49: 'Or, l'œuvre de la femme, par l'amour, est aussi magie bénéfique ou magie maléfique. Elle exalte les forces de l'homme ou bien elle les détruit. Je suis bien obligé de reconnaître que le plus souvent elle les détruit.'

[997] Guaita, *Serpent de la Genèse*, 2:416-417; Papus, *Traité élémentaire de science* occulte, 141-142 (whose interpretation is a bit different and does not mention devil or goat; the inverted pentagram is a pictogram for a man with his legs in the air, thus signifying his subjugation to passions and evil spirits); also Michelet, *L'Amour et la Magie*, 48-49.

Huysmans does not seem to have been particularly impressed by this wealth of theorizing. 'I am plunged in work in search of a demonical and sodomizing priest who says black Masses,' he wrote to his Dutch friend Arij Prins on 6 February 1890, 'I need him for my book. I had to penetrate the world of the occultists for all that – such a bunch of simpletons and swindlers!'[998] He would vent his scorn for the neo-Levians uninhibitedly on the pages of *Là-Bas*, calling them 'complete ignoramuses' and 'unquestionable imbeciles'.[999] One wonders what caused this profound irritation with a group of people that in many respects was dealing with the same issues as he did. Obviously it could be hard to take somebody like Péladan *au sérieux*; but this may not have been the root of Huysmans' irritation. In the end, the problem might have been *precisely* that the modern magicians were too much like himself, too easy to understand: 'insignificant young men looking to exploit the whims of a public fed up with Positivism'.[1000] They did not play up to the part that Huysmans was looking for. He was seeking after something more extreme, more alien, something from another time. And at roughly the same moment that he was expressing his disappointment with the occultists to Prins, he was already on the trace of somebody just like this – a man truly Satanic, truly demonic, with more than a whiff of the Middle Ages about him. It is at this point that the ex-priest Joseph-Antoine Boullan (1824-1893) enters our story.

Joseph Boullan

Time and again while exploring the occultist subculture of Paris, Huysmans had heard rumours of an excommunicated priest in Lyons practising Black Magic. None of the leading occultists were prepared to bring him into contact with this man: but by another route, he had managed to obtain his address. On 6 February 1890 (the same day he heaped scorn upon the occultists to Arij Prins), Huysmans dispatched a long letter to Lyons. In it, he told about his fruitless efforts to document himself on Satanism among the occultists of Paris – 'incontestable imbeciles' who had wearied him with 'idiotic theories wrapped up in the most appalling verbiage' – and went on to write:

> Several times I heard your name pronounced in tones of horror – and this in itself predisposed me in your favour. Then I heard rumours that you were the only initiate in the ancient mysteries who had obtained practical as well as theoretical results, and I was told that if anyone could produce undeniable phenomena, it was you, and you alone… This I should like to believe, because it would mean that I had found a rare personality in these drab times – and I could give you some excellent publicity if you needed it. I could set you as the Superman, the Satanist, the only one in existence, far removed from the infantile spiritualism of the occultists. Allow me then, Monsieur, to put these questions to you – quite bluntly, for I prefer a straightforward approach. Are you a Satanist? And can you give me any information about succubae – Del Rio, Bodin, Sinistrari and Görres being quite inadequate on this subject? You will note that I ask for no initiation, no secret lore – only for reliable documents, for results you have obtained in your experiments.[1001]

An answer from Lyons arrived by return of post. It contained a polite refusal of Huysmans' publicity offer and a formal denial that its sender was a Satanist: instead, he was 'an Adept who had declared war on all demoniacal cults'. It was true that he was an expert on incubi and succubae, but he did not want to give any detailed information until Huysmans had made the purpose of his inquiry more clear. The letter was signed 'Dr. Johannès' and was headed with

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[998] Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Arij Prins*, 182.
[999] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 137.
[1000] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 137.
[1001] Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 160; Henri Jouvin, 'Les Lettres de J.-K. Huysmans: Essais de Bibliographie,' *Bulletin de la Société J.-K Huysmans* 28 (1953) 27:288-296, here 289. According to Baldick, this letter was sent on 5 February; Jouvin gives 6 February as its date.

the motto *Quis ut Deus?*: 'Who is like God?' – the Latin translation of Michael, the name of the archangel subduing Satan.[1002]

Huysmans replied again the next day, tactically changing his tone, and claiming that he did not want to glorify Satanism, but merely prove its continuing existence.

> I am weary of the theories of my friend Zola, whose absolute positivism disgusts me. I am not less weary of the systems of Charcot, who did want to convince me that demonianism and Satanism is just an atavism that he can check or develop with the women treated at La Salpétiere by pressing their ovaries. I am even wearier, if this is possible, of occultists and spiritualists: the phenomena they practise, although very real, are too identical. I want to shake up all these people, create a work of art of *supernatural realism*, of *spiritual naturalism*.[1003]

This answer seemed to please the priest from Lyons. He promised his full cooperation, and confirmed Huysmans' supposition that devil worship still existed – indeed, he wrote, it was flourishing more than ever. 'I can tell you things that will certainly make your book interesting. I can put at your disposal documents that will enable you to prove that Satanism is still active in our time, and in what form and in what circumstances. Your work will thus endure as a monumental history of Satanism in the nineteenth century.'[1004] In the weeks that followed, 'documents' started to pour in. Huysmans was delighted. 'I am in constant correspondence with the sacrilegious priest who invokes succubae at Lyons,' he wrote his friend Arij Prins, 'He sends me the most curious documents about Satanism in the present age. […] I expect to make a little book with all this that will shake up the pork faces [mufles] of our time – because incontestable documents show that from the Middle Ages on, the Black Mass has still been said. In the seventeenth century, an *abbé* called Guibourt [sic] celebrated it upon the naked womb of De la Montespan – and at this moment, the practice continues; there are adepts throughout the whole of Europe and even in America, where Longfellow, the poet, is the leader of the sect that devotes itself to sacrilege.'[1005] Clearly, Huysmans believed to have struck a goldmine: he had found the one person who could document him freely and extensively on the hidden world of contemporary Satanism.

Who was this former priest Boullan? Joseph-Antoine Boullan was born in 1824 and ordained a priest in the revolutionary year of 1848. Gifted with undeniable intellectual capacities, he developed into a prolific writer of spiritual books and tracts, and may (or may not) have obtained a theological doctorate in Rome at some date. After spending some time as a missionary of the recently founded Congregation of the Precious Blood, he soon became involved with the world of Reparationist and apocalyptic piety that was flourishing in France at this time.[1006] Within certain Roman Catholic circles, the Revolution had given great credence to the notion that spiritual reparation was needed: the faithful were called upon to perform substitutionary penance for the sins that the nation had committed in overthrowing the king, persecuting the church, and profaning the holy days and the divine name. By doing this, France might be restored to its former glory as a Christian nation, and the tides of revolution and secularisation turned. In the margins of the Church, this idea was seldom

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[1002] Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 160-161.

[1003] Jouvin, 'Les Lettres de J.-K. Huysmans,' 289.

[1004] Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 161; Frick, *Die Satanisten*, 2:194.

[1005] Letter from 19 February 1890; Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Arij Prins*, 184; see also Huysmans' letter from the same year to Jules Destrée, quoted in J.-K. Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Jules Destrée* (Genève: Droz, 1967), 162-163.

[1006] For biographical data on Boullan, Marcel Thomas, 'Un aventurier de la mystique: L'abbé Boullan,' *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques* 8 (1963):116-161, is still authorative. See also in the same volume, Pierre Lambert, 'Adèle Chevalier raconte…,' *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques* 8 (1963): 217-226, and Jean Jacquinot, 'En marge de J.-K. Huysmans: Un Procès de l'Abbé Boullan, ' *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques* 8 (1963):206-216.

coupled to other elements of fringe spirituality, such as new apparitions of the Holy Virgin, Naundorffism, and a resurgence of the medieval belief in the imminent coming of the Age of the Holy Ghost.

Boullan was evidently attracted to this milieu and saw a place for himself there. During a pilgrimage to La Salette (where the Virgin had appeared to two children in 1846) he met Adèle Chevalier, a Belgian nun from Soissons who experienced visions on a regular base. He became her confessor, and together they proceeded to establish a religious order at Sèvres, near Versailles, intended for both male and female believers who wanted to devote themselves to the 'Work of Reparation for Blasphemies and Sunday Violations'.[1007] By this time, he and Adèle had become lovers. In 1860, Adèle became pregnant, and according to a personal confession he later wrote (the famous 'Cahier rose'), Boullan believed he had to 'destroy' the new- or stillborn child, after first baptizing it 'by way of precaution'. Apparently he thought – or intended to claim – that the child was a 'monster' engendered by a demon.[1008] Boullan also engaged in sexual contact with other members of the convent, the populace of which was predominantly female – sometimes ordering the pious women to insert the host into their vagina.[1009] These unusual devotional practices were justified by an extreme extension of the doctrine of spiritual reparation, according to which the believer could not only take on penance for the sins of other people, but at occasion even their sins themselves.[1010] Boullan drew attention to himself by the exorcisms he practiced on possessed nuns – according to some sources, he spit them in the mouth, gave them hosts mixed with his own

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[1007] 'L'œuvre réparatrice des blasphèmes et de la violation des Dimanches'; Jacquinot, 'En marge de J.-K. Huysmans', 26.

[1008] 'J.A. Boullan, Confession au St. Office, ou 'cahier rose'. Copie faite d'après microfilm en possession du R.P. Bruno. Janv. 1951.', Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fonds Lambert, 95/39, f. 2vº: '…un monstre, qui n'avait rien d'humain'. Boullan burned the infant body three days later. It is clear from Boullan's story that he did not 'sacrifice' the child during the Eucharistic rite, as some authors have claimed; Adèle Chevalier merely gave birth (more or less) at the moment that he performed Mass, but was not present at the rite. The child may have been deformed. Attribution of deformed children to demons has some precedents in premodern (informal) Roman Catholic practice. Nicolas Rémy, on p. 26 of his *Démonolâtrie* from 1582 claims that deformed children are engendered by demons: thus the Church 'considers them unfit to receive Christian baptism, and we take care to smother them to death as soon as they are born; doubtless because they carry suspicion of the hidden presence of a Demon lurking within them.' (Cited from Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions*, 102.)

That their might have might have been different readings of this event is indicated by Boullan on the same page of the Cahier rose, where he recounts that two other members of the congregation may have talked about this during the judicial inquest and regrets that he was not allowed to be present at their interrogation, 'afin que le démon ne leur fit pas dire autre chose que la vérité.' They might have claimed that he was the father of the child, thus making his act one of simple infanticide to cover up his own sexual practices. Boullan would hint at the occurrences in a letter to Huysmans on the Black Mass from 4 September 1890 ('Lettres de l'Abbé Boullan à Jules Bois et à Huysmans,' Bibliothèque nationale de France, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 119vº-120 = Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 219-223), where he presents them as a personal triumph over 'un démon qui voulait à tout prix me faire monter à l'échafaud', recounting that he used the power of the Consecration to vanquish the demon and heal Adèle.

[1009] These practices are clearly admitted by Boullan in the Cahier rose, f. 1vº-3vº, where he confesses to have made use of 'caca' to cure skin diseases ('J'en fait mettre une fois à Mlle Zoé Legrix sur tout la figure pour l'humilier'), to have 'regardé dans les parties génitales de plusieurs personnes', to have exhibited himself several times and had the sisters touch his genitals, to have ordered them to adopt indecent postures, bath naked in his presence, and embrace each other in the bed 'd'une manière indécente', and to have had oral sex with one of the sisters, 'et deux fois, je crois, elle a avalé de la semence'. He also admitted having ordered 'quelques personnes de la maison de mettre dans les parties génitales des hosties' to chase away incubi – although he added that these hosts were not consecrated 'mais données, je crois alors d'une manière miraculeuse' – and to have asked a sister 'de venir avec moi en esprit, comme si je pouvais aller charnellement avec elle'. Boullan maintains, however, that he kept his practices with the sisters within certain bounds, 'sans violer la virginité, ni pénétré en elles'; this happened only two times with a sister called Hortense Guerry.

[1010] Thomas, 'Un aventurier de la mystique,' 131-133, quoting Boullan, who also makes veiled references to these ideas on f. 3vº-4vº of the Cahier rose.

excrement or Adèle's urine, and taught them how they could have spiritual sex with Jesus and the Saints.[1011] The bishop of Versailles suspended his sacerdotal dignity, his convent was disbanded by the police, and Boullan was put on trial and spent three years in prison for swindle. After this, he departed for Rome, where he seems to have confessed himself to the Holy Office and apparently was restored to the priesthood.[1012] It is improbable, however, that Boullan ever really mended his ways. An indication for this may be found in the already mentioned 'Cahier rose', which contains some rather peculiar drafts of what seem to be demon-binding rites somewhere halfway between exorcisms and magical evocations. In these rites, Boullan orders the 'cornus' – 'horned ones' – which are attached to the priests and ecclesiastical dignitaries judging his case to do him no harm; otherwise they will be condemned to 'perpetual hell' in case of very grave offences, or to 99 years of hell or '50 years in the tower of Babel' in case of lighter infringements.[1013] In a rite dated 16 June 1867, he even attempted to replace all the 'horned ones who are delegated to and found with the inquisitorial judges' with new ones. These texts were clearly sketches, meant to be written out on other pieces of paper for ritual purposes. In several cases, Boullan noted that he had burnt them on specific dates, probably with some kind of ceremony; and in one case, the 'horned ones' were told to depart with the (posted?) piece of writing itself, 'but without being attached to it' – a precautionary addendum that may have been meant to prevent the letter from becoming demon-infested.[1014]

After his return to France, Boullan became editor of *Les Annales de la Sainteté* ('The Annals of Saintliness'), a periodical devoted to apparitions of saints and visions of Catholic mystics.

[1011] These allegations can be found in Charles Sauvestre, *Les congrégations religieuses dévoilées* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1870), 118; giving the confessions of Boullan we quoted earlier, their veracity must be considered probable.

[1012] Thomas, 'Un aventurier de la mystique,' 136. Bruno de Jésus-Marie, 'La confession de Boullan,' *Satan: Les Études Carmélitaines* 27 (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1948): 420-426, here 420, maintains that Boullan was only freed when Piedmontese forces captured Rome in 1870. It is not certain that Boullan even deposited the 'confession' he wrote down in his Cahier rose; the texts in the notebook are clearly drafts that were meant to be copied in a better hand later on (see hereafter).

[1013] Jésus-Marie, 'La confession de Boullan,' 420, identifies these 'cornus' with 'les prêtres romains' *tout court*, but this interpretation is not supported by a close reading of the text.

[1014] Cahier rose, f. 8vº, 11, 12vº, 13vº. The historical fate of the 'Cahier rose' is a story in itself. After Boullan's demise, the notebook, together with other personal effects, was entrusted to Huysmans by Boullan's followers. Contrary to the assertion of Joanny Bricaud (*J.-K. Huysmans et le Satanisme: D'après des documents inédits* (Paris: Bibliothèque Chacornac, 1913), 76), Huysmans did not burn these documents, but legated them in his will to his friend Léon Leclaire, in the hope, it seems, that a 'priest that is apt to study and comprehend them' would one day be able to use them for apublication – with the stipulation that they would subsequently be destroyed (see Louis Massignon, 'Huysmans devant la 'confession' de Boullan,' *Bulletin de la Société J.-K Huysmans* 22 (1949) 21:40-50, here 40-41). Leclaire, in his turn, entrusted them to the Arabist and Huysmans disciple Louis Massignon, who, after searching in vain for a suitable priest, officially transmitted them to Cardinal Giovanni Mercati, Prefect of the Vatican Secret Archives, on 14 July 1930, who deposited them in the 'Reserve' of the Vatican Library. When the Carmelites issued their famous 666-page volume on Satan in 1948, Bruno de Jésus-Marie obtained permission to publish from the manuscript and received a copy on microfilm of the Cahier. In his article, however, he only included some rather general references to its contents and a hazy reproduction of a few choice pages – according to his own statement because the reader otherwise 'n'en aurait supporté la lecture' (Jésus-Marie, 'La confession de Boullan,' 426); according to Louis Massignon's malicious suggestion because he feared 'certains chocs en retour préternaturels' (Massignon, 'Huysmans devant la 'confession' de Boullan,' 42). It was this microfilm that was consulted en typed out by the French Huysmans scholar Pierre Lambert in January 1950; this dactylographic copy can now be consulted in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal of the Bibliothèque national de France, where Lambert's collection of Huysmaniana is currently kept.

Apart from the Cahier rose, a great number of letters, mostly by Boullan to Huysmans and vice versa, must still be kept in the Vatican libraries, as well as some other personal documents from the legacy of Boullan (a raw inventory can be found in Massignon, 'Huysmans devant la 'confession' de Boullan,' 49). Due to limitations of time and resources, I have not been able to consult these, but I do not doubt that additional scholarly insights can be obtained from doing so.

Once again, he used this publication to propagate Reparationist and Restorationist views: in an article in the issue of July 1874, for instance, he urged the Papacy to hallow the executed Louis XVI as a Catholic martyr, and thus repair the 'social crime' of the Revolution.[1015] The doctrinal views he uttered in this publication and his renewed activities as an exorcist, however, earned him another, and this time final, suspension, followed by official excommunication.

Stripped from his sacerdotal dignity, Boullan did not have to look far to find a suitable job vacancy. Already before his excommunication, he had been in contact with Eugène Vintras (1807-1875), the leader of a neo-Catholic religious movement centred on the 'Work of Mercy'. In 1839, Vintras had started to receive visitations of the archangel Michael, announcing the speedy arrival of the 'Third Kingdom', the reign of the Holy Spirit.[1016] At that moment, Vintras had still been a factory superintendent in the small town of Tilly; but he soon became the official prophet of a fairly numerous religious movement, with congregations or 'septaines' sprinkled over France, Spain, Italy, and even England. Except from the familiar mixture of millennialism and Naundorffism, Vintrasism was characterized by specific points of doctrine. Some of them will be recounted later on: but prominent among them was the belief that for the faithful, the reign of the Spirit had already begun: bodily and spiritually, they had already entered perfection. To underscore this point, all Vintras' disciples received new angelic names divinely revealed to him. Another consequence was the fact that in Vintrasism, women could also officiate: a special ritual called the Provictimal Sacrifice of Mary had been instated for them, while Vintras and the other male Vintrasian priests celebrated the Ritual of Melchisedec. The traditional Mass with its re-enactment of Christ's suffering was destined to become obsolete, since it belonged to the era of the Son that was now passing away. This was also symbolized in the sacerdotal vestments of Vintras, the stole of which featured an inverted cross, signifying that the age of suffering was over. Precepts like these were obviously ill at ease with official Roman- Catholic dogma; and in 1851, the group of Vintras had been declared a 'criminal association' and 'repugnant sect' by Papal brief.[1017]

Vintras died in 1875, the same year Boullan was defrocked a second time. The latter immediately went to Lyons and declared himself the official successor of Vintras.[1018] Although the majority of the Vintrasians refused to recognize him as such, Boullan managed to assemble a small group of followers around him. In Lyons, he lived in the house of the architect Pascal Misme and his family; close by were two young sisters, the Mademoiselles Gay, who earned their living as seamstresses and had been given the angelic names of Sahaël and Anandhaël. Boullan was also assisted by a female 'somnambulist' who functioned as a medium, and by Julie Thibault, a woman of some fifty years old who was something of a mystic in her own right. She had left her husband when still young to wander the roads as a pilgrim and received visions and prophetic dreams on a regular base. Boullan had granted her the honorary title of 'Female Melchisedec'. His own person he designated as 'Jean-Baptiste' ('John the Baptist'), in logical imitation of Vintras, who had styled himself 'the new Elijah'.

At about this time, Boullan seems to have sought contact with esoteric and occult circles in Paris. As we have seen in the case of Lévi and Péladan, Catholicism and occultism were not

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[1015] 'Le martyre du Roi Louis XVI au jugement du Pape Pie VI,' *Annales de la Sainteté au XIXe siècle* (July 1874) 55:45-54

[1016] For Vintras, see Maurice Garçon, *Vintras: Hérésiarque et prophète* (Paris: Librairie critique Émile Nourry, 1928).

[1017] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 100-101.

[1018] Boullan's own account of his meeting with and subsequent succession of Vintras can be found in one of his journals, kept in the file 'J.A. Boullan. Textes, notes et lettres, après 1875,' Bibliothèque nationale de France [henceforth: BnF], Fonds Lambert, 98/17, especially p. 1-6.

necessarily felt to be at odds at the time, and Boullan's interest in occultism was longstanding and evidently genuine. Even in his later correspondence, he made frequent references to Kabbalah and Tarot, and one witness recalled he had a pentagram tattooed above his left eyelid.[1019] There was some exchange of letters with Parisian occultists, and Boullan was visited in Lyons by the Canon Roca, a priest who had been excommunicated because of his esoteric and socialist sympathies and later became a member of the Rosicrucian Supreme Council.[1020] The Canon, in his turn, invited Stanislas de Guaita to come over. Although Péladan warned him to be wary of the old exorcist, Guaita accepted the invitation. In Lyons, he was welcomed with open arms by the two abbés and participated freely in the Vintrasian rites, even receiving some kind of consecration, it seems, from the hands of Boullan himself. Just a short time later, however, he left in all haste, apparently taking Roca with him.

Two different versions exist of the events that surrounded Guiata's subsequent break-up with the Lyons Carmel. Boullan later would confide his recollections of what had happened to Huysmans. 'The Parisian Occultists,' he wrote, 'and Guaita in particular, came here to trick me out of the secrets of my power. Guaita even prostrated himself before Madame Thibault and tricked her into given him her blessing: 'I am nothing but a child that wants to be taught,' he said. For twelve days, we were like a family to him.'[1021] Soon after his brusque departure, Boullan reported, the treacherous marquis had assaulted him by way of magic during the night; Boullan had only barely saved his life by performing the Sacrifice of Glory and receiving communion.[1022] Guaita, in his turn, reported being astrally attacked by Boullan after he had left Lyons. In an undated letter to his friend Péladan, he wrote: 'The other night, I was attacked fluidically with enormous force, and returned the poisoned current to its centre or pole of emission, in such a way that the conjurer in question must have sincerely regretted his encroachments. – Nergal has been paralysed in his bed and was about to submit to the outrages of a succubus without being able to move. He only managed to save himself by the name of *Jodhévauhé*. – Caillé however has succumbed to a succubus.' In another letter to Péladan, he alluded to the reasons that had made him break off relations with his host. 'The Abbé B. is a learned and first-rate theologian, but he lives too much with the Spirits, and falls into a fatal error with regard to the Spiritual Marriage; I will tell you about that under four eyes.'[1023]

[1019] Even in his later letters to Huysmans, Boullan often referred to the 'sublime Tarot'; see Maurice M. Belval, *Des ténèbres à la lumière: Etapes de la pensée mystique de J.K. Huysmans* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1968), 84, 144, 117. Boulan sent Huysmans extract from the Zohar on 23 July 1890 (BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 104 = 'J.A. Boullan. Textes, notes, et lettres, 1883-1893,' BnF, Fonds Lambert 97/6065 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 153-161), and on 6 May 1890 a document entitled 'La destinée de Mr. J.K. Huysmans par les figures du Tarot et les 5 essences en Dieu' (BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 257-278). In his personal papers, extracts on Hindu mythology and Paracelsus can be found (BnF, Fonds Lambert, 97/33; BnF, Fonds Lambert, 98/24).
The detail about the pentagram is mentioned by Jules Bois in *Les Petites Religions de Paris* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, s.a. [1894]), 127.

[1020] See Boullan's Journal for 1885-1886, BnF, Fonds Lambert, 98/19, p. 44. Boullan had apparently visited Roca in Paris in February 1886: the latter returned the visit in July of the same year. 'J'ai fait son marriage spirituel le 26 Juillet 1886,' Boullan notes on the same page, where he also mentions contacts with René Caillié and Albert Jhounet, both familiar names from the world of nineteenth-century French occultism.

[1021] Letter from Boullan to Huysmans, quoted without date in Bricaud, *J.-K. Huysmans et le Satanisme*, 35. Billy, *Stanislas de Guaita*, 134, maintains Guaita was ordained as a priest by Boullan. The marquis himself wrote on this in an undated letter to Péladan headed 'confidentiel': 'Quant aux onctions que j'ai reçues, il m'est impossible de te dire *de qui* je les ai reçues; mais je les ai *régulièrement* reçues, valablement reçues, selon le rituel catholique romain, et non le rituel Eliaque. Je suis donc *Sacerdote occulte*, comme l'ont été, *à toutes époques, tous les adeptes du 3e degré*, et j'ai tous les pouvoirs pour exercer le culte in secretis, *magiquement* et non *sacerdotalement*.' (Guaita, *Lettres inédites au Sâr Joséphin Péladan*, 128; the whole letter is extremely interesting in this respect.)

[1022] Compare 'J.A. Boullan. Journal sommaire de sa vie de 1876 au Juillet 1889,' BnF, Fonds Lambert, 98/23, p. 55.

What was this 'fatal error' that Guaita would not put upon paper? It seems Boullan had elaborated somewhat on the doctrines he had taken over from Vintras. To the Vintrasian idea of 'celestified' believers, he added the notion of 'celestified' marriages between the faithful. These 'unions of life', he claimed, created a 'Ferment of Life' that was highly beneficial on the spiritual plane, fortified prayer, and, when performed in their name, helped deceased persons who were still wandering through the lower spheres to enter heaven and take on their final spiritual form. To further one's spiritual growth, one could contract such marriages with somebody spiritually superior, while people of great personal merit could engage in spiritual marriage with beings of a lower order, such as elementary spirits, thus helping them on in their ontological development. What Guaita had found out, was the fact that these 'celestified' marriages did not merely involve the spirit of the faithful, but their body as well.[1024] Boullan was 'spiritually' involved with almost all women in his small group of followers, and most notably with the two seamstress sisters, with whom he shared the bed together or separately, under the maternal blessing of their pious mother. An account of such a spiritual marriage ceremony can be found in an undated manuscript from Boullan's private archives, in which he describes an 'union of life' he concluded with one of the Gay sisters. 'After praying,' the old abbé writes in the elevated tone of the mystics, 'the heart of the Elected had been enflamed with the fires of Pure Love. The only thing that remained was to rise into Eden. […] She told me: 'Jean-Baptiste, take me; embrace me in your fire and let me fly into Eden, into the bridal chamber of the spiritual spouses.' This was accomplished. […] The Bridegroom came; the communion of life took place in a beatific ecstasy. 'Oh!' the Celestial Fiancé exclaimed, 'My heart is communing with Life itself!''[1025]

From other documents in Boullan's personal archives, it becomes clear that these practices had been going on for some time. In a 'General Confession' to his congregation from 6 February 1881, Boullan had already talked about the problems that accompanied these 'unions of life'. 'The problem that has to be solved is this: one does not possess a state [of life] that entails prerogatives, and one must begin to exercise these prerogatives to acquire this state. […] The Chosen Ones of the Carmel freely and voluntary consent to trample the laws of the Reign that is dying, to enter into the freedom of the children of God, regenerated, transfigured. The first difficulties will be followed by even greater ones with regard to the putting in practice of the holy unions of life.'[1026] In a manuscript from 1884, Boullan noted down the 'Mission of Moses and Aaron'. The 'First Initiation to the third degree of the Henochite Tarot', we learn from this, consisted of the praying and blessing of the 'organ of love', including the laying on of hands. 'The fall has made the organ of love the Gate of

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[1023] Undated letters from Guaita to Péladan; Guaita, *Lettres inédites au Sâr Joséphin Péladan*, 106, 126 – see also ibidem, 128.

[1024] Garçon, *Vintras*, 151, does think it improbable that Vintras had endorsed this kind of practices, despite rumors to the contrary – during one of his spells in prison, however, one of his lieutenants had briefly instated practices of communal male masturbation and female sexual licence (ibidem, 109-125; cf. Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 108(n)).

[1025] 'Relation de la cérémonie pour la conception par Claudine Gay de corps glorieux de Madame de Raimbaud, gouvernante de Louis XVII, 14 février [1882?],' BnF, Fonds Lambert, 96/34; partly published in Pierre Lambert, 'En marge de 'Là-Bas': Une Cérémonie au 'Carmel de Jean-Baptiste', à Lyon, d'après une relation de Boullan,' *Bulletin de la Société J.-K Huysmans* 28 (1953) 27:297-306, here 300-301. Boullan's text suggests that other believers were present at this ceremony.

[1026] 'Confession de Jean B^te^ Elie Gabriel, pour le Pardon général, le relèvement et l'absolution plénière du 6 Février 1881, Au Sanctuaire du Trématique Eliaque,' BnF, Fonds Lambert, 96/32, p. [3], 5: 'Le problème à résoudre était celui-ci – on n'est pas en possession d'un état qui donne des prérogatives, et il faut entrer en exercice de ces prérogatives, pour acquérir cet état. […] Les Elus et Elues du Carmel consentaient librement, volontairement à fouler aux pieds les lois du Règne expiant, pour entrer dans la liberté des enfants de Dieu, régénérés, transfigurés. Aux premières difficultés allaient en succéder des plus grandes, dans la mise en pratique des saintes unions de vie.'

Animality: that is the reason why this organ hides itself, from shame for the state to which it has been reduced on earth. But Elijah has brought us [tidings] from heaven that this organ is also the Gate of transformation and of glory, and thus we regard it with joy, while blessing it, and for us, there is no shame anymore.'[1027] The first initiation to the first degree was more profound: 'The chosen one asks to prove her love; she opens her organ of love which is well constituted, as it has to be with the woman that aspires to give love. With joy she receives the organ of love in its full force within her; she brushes it with her most tender caresses; she excites it, but without effort on her part, solely by the fluids with which it is surrounded.'[1028]
In a document entitled 'Doctrine of Life from the Zohar concerning the holy laws of the live-giving unions of the Virginal Bride and the ever-virginal Bridegroom', Boullan added: 'And let him penetrate into the holy of holies that is the organ of love and let the Woman Bride receive the union of life, and let the organ that is the holy of holies obtain the blessing of the fluids of life, in that part which is called Sion. […] And these fluids of life, in the organ where they come together, and which are transmitted, in celestial and terrestrial forms, by that most holy organ, are of the whiteness of light, and it is for this reason that they are called [of] life.'[1029]
The 'Ferments of Life', this text suggests, may have consisted of a mixture of male and female sexual effluvia.
It had been these practices of sexual mysticism that had scandalized Guaita. After all, Boullan posed as a magician, and thus brought disrepute to the adepts of the Holy Kabbalah, such as Guaita himself. He decided to take action against Boullan. By coincidence, he had just made the acquaintance of a young occultist by the name of Oswald Wirth who happened to be engaged into correspondence with Boullan. Together, they planned to trick Boullan into a written statement regarding the true nature of his 'unions of Life'. For months, the defrocked priest kept being hazy about the subject, shrouding the mystery in clouds of mystical language: until Wirth decided to write to him that divine inspiration had revealed to him what the rite was all about. Boullan answered that God had disclosed him the true answer by special grace; and shortly afterwards, the sisters Gay sent Wirth a letter (doubtlessly dictated by Boullan), telling that they were ardently praying for him to come to Lyons and join them in a union of life.[1030]
These epistolary confessions would have been sufficiently incriminating in themselves, but the two occultists took the time to collect some more damaging material from a former member of Boullan's group, particularly in regard to the Abbé's sexual endeavours.[1031] After this, Guaita convened the Supreme Council of the Rosicrucian Order, whose duties

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[1027] 'Mission de Moyse et Aaron. Initiation à ce Ministère de la 1er de la 3ème degré du Tarot Henochite,' BnF, Fonds Lambert, 98/11-12, f. 14-14º; quote f. 7: 'La déchéance a fait de l'organe de l'amour la Porte de l'Animalité, c'est pourquoi cet organe se cache par honte de l'état où il a été réduit sur la terre. Mais Elie nous a apporté du ciel qui cet organe est aussi la Porte des transformations et cette de la gloire, aussi nous les regarder avec joie, en le bénissant, et pour nous il n'a plus de honte […].'
[1028] BnF, Fonds Lambert, 98/11-12, f. 20: 'L'élue demande a prouver son amour; elle ouvre son organe d'amour qui est bien constitué, comme il doit être en le Femme qui aspire à donner l'amour. Aussi c'est avec joie qu'elle reçoit en elle l'organe d'amour dans sa force; elle la frotte comme de ses plus tendres caresses; elle l'excite, mais sans effort de sa part, uniquement par les fluides dont il l'entoure.'
[1029] 'Doctrine de vie du Sohar concernant les lois saintes dans les unions vivifiantes de l'Épouse Virginale et de l'Époux toujours vierge,' BnF, Fonds Lambert, 97/47: 'Et qui celui-ci pénètre dans le saint des saints qui est l'organe d'amour et que la Femme Épouse reçoive l'union de vie, et que cet organe qui est le saint des saints obtienne la bénédiction des fluides de vie, dans cette partie qui est nommée Sion. […] Et ces fluides de vie dans l'organe où ils se réunissent et qui sont communiqués, célestes et terrestres, par cet organe très saint, sont de la blancheur de la lumière, et c'est pour cela qu'ils sont nommés la vie.'
[1030] Guaita, *Serpent de la Genèse*, 1:482-487. In his personal notes, Boullan noted that this union had been enacted 'in spirit and soul' on 17 Augustus 1885, 10 p.m.; autobiographical notes 1883-1884, Bnf, Fonds Lambert, 98/17, p. 9.
[1031] Guaita, *Serpent de la Genèse*, 1:457-516; also Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita*, 98-107.

prominently included that of 'combating Black Magic wherever it was encountered'. This improvised court of honour, consisting of Guaita, Papus, Péladan and a few of the marquis' occultist friends, duly condemned Boullan in 1887.[1032] Wirth notified the Lyons prophet of the verdict in a letter dated 24 May of that year, urging him to stop his 'sacrilegious manoeuvres' because the 'initiatory tribunal' would not tolerate to see the Kabbalah profaned for very long. 'For you are condemned. As yet more overcome by Christian charity rather than strict justice, however, the initiationary tribunal wishes to wait: the sentence remains suspended over your head, until the day that by lack of more merciful ways, its application will have become inevitable.'[1033]

Huysmans – to whom we shall now return – was certainly aware of the controversy between Boullan and the occultists. Just a few days after he had exchanged his first letters with Boullan, he had had an interview with Oswald Wirth, who had warned him in plain terms of the *abbé*. On a later occasion, the occultists went to see Huysmans at his desk in the Ministry of the Interior to tell him what they had discovered about Boullan: but the Decadent writer only smiled wryly, telling them that if the old man 'had found a mystical dodge for obtaining a little carnal satisfaction', so much the better for him.[1034] Huysmans' indifference might have been related to the fact that at this date he still seems to have thought that Boullan was essentially a Satanist – despite Boullan's own assurances to the contrary, and despite Wirth's qualified statement that the former priest was surely profaning Christianity's most holy rites, but not worshipping Satan in the formal sense of the word.[1035]
Boullan, for his part, did all that was in his power to recruit this promising new neophyte from Paris to his cause. In his letters, he gave Huysmans his own personal accounts of his conflict with the Roman- Catholic ecclesiastical authorities (which would be included almost word for word in *Là-Bas*), as well as of his dispute with the occultists; and he actively tried to involve the writer in his semi-perpetual spiritual warfare with the neo-Rosicrucians.[1036] Already in his second reply, he had given Huysmans a 'word of warning': the occultists, although only superficially initiated in the secrets of magic, were certainly capable of 'small results'. 'I presume you have armed yourself for your defence,' Boullan went on, 'for when you will do what you say you will do in your letter, you will certainly incite them against you.'[1037] On 24 July 1890, Huysmans notified Prins of the fact that he was condemned to death by the Rose+Croix, 'one of the recently-founded sects of Satanism in France'. 'In Magic, a secret disclosed is a secret lost, and for them, the point at issue is to prevent the realisation of my book'.[1038] We can be pretty sure that the information about this death warrant, and the whole

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[1032] Guaita, *Serpent de la Genèse*, 1:457. Indeed, it may have been that Guaita had primarily called the Rosicrucian Order into life to deal with the case of Boullan; this is suggested by Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita*, 109, and by a letter from Papus in *L'Écho de Paris* 10 (13 Jan. 1893) 3162:3.
[1033] Letter from Oswald Wirth to Boullan, 24 May 1887, BnF, Fonds Lambert 30/5 (13), f. 2:'Car vous êtes condamné. Mais, plus épris encore de charité chrétienne que de stricte justice, le tribunal initiatique veut attendre: la sentence demeure suspendue sur votre tête, jusqu'au jour où, à défaut de moyens plus miséricordieux, son application deviendrait inévitable.' The text of the letter of condemnation is also reproduced in Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita*, 135-138.
[1034] Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 162. BnF, Fonds Lambert, 30/5 contains a 'feuillet de notes autographes de Huysmans' that were probably (according to Lambert) jotted down after his interview with Wirth on 7 Febnruary 1890, containing references to the earlier judicial proceedings against Boullan and to the book of Sauvestre , as well as Boullan's address. The same file contains a letter by Wirth dated 15 February 1890 that gives the precise title of the book By Sauvestre 'dont je vous ai parlé' (BnF, Fonds Lambert, 30/5; the categorization of this file seems inconsistent).
[1035] Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 159; Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita*, 142; also 103, 107; Herman Bossier, *Un personnage de roman: Le chanoine Docre de La-Bas de J.-K. Huysmans* (Bruxelles: Les Ecrits, 1943), 100.
[1036] Thomas, 'Un aventurier de la mystique,' 143.
[1037] Frick, *Die Satanisten* , 2:194.

death warrant itself, stemmed from Lyons and not from the gentlemen of the Rosicrucian Order.

Huysmans only definitely chose sides, so it seems, after he visited Boullan and his circle in September 1890. Wary because of his prior experiences with the Parisian occultists, Boullan had first sent out his trusted assistant Julie Thibault to check the state of mind of the Decadent writer. Huysmans was very impressed by this remarkable woman and the almost medieval life she led, pilgrimaging from one Holy Virgin shrine to another and living on milk, honey, and Eucharistic bread all the while. Still, he does not seem to have been totally convinced of her holiness. In his private notebook, at any rate, he jotted down that the night after she left, he was visited by a succubus who exhausted him with erotic variations that would have been impossible in real life. He felt sure that the old woman had set this sex-demon upon him.[1039] (The thought that the pious Thibault might have had this kind of inclination for the writer of *Là-Bas* may not be as absurd as it seems. Julie continued to correspond separately with J.-K. Huysmans for the next years, and Boullan told Huysmans in one of his letters that she 'nourished the design' to serve him 'Ferments of Life' to assist in his spiritual transformation: 'Ah, dearest friend, this is not to be despised, for this rejuvenates and vitalizes one's forces'.[1040])

When Huysmans was duly invited to Lyons, he wrote excitedly to Arij Prins that he would surely see some memorable sights there. 'Those people are without a shadow of a doubt diabolical creatures. […] I have only three more chapters to write now – but I cannot start with the first of them without going down there, where I ought to see some special Masses.'[1041] Did he refer to the 'Mozarabic' Masses of Vintras, or did he expect to witness a Black Mass at Lyons? It is hard to tell; but it is clear that he did still regard Boullan *cum suis* as candidates for Satanism. What Huysmans *did* eventually see at Boullan's Carmel is hard to tell. Huysmans does not seem to have left us any accounts of his first visit to Lyons. He certainly would not have seen any 'messe noire', but probably witnessed the 'Sacrifice of Melchisedec', and possibly also the ceremonies that Boullan staged to counter the magic attacks of Guaita, Péladan, Papus, and their ilk. During his second visit almost a year later, Huysmans gave an impressed account of these 'Wagrams in the air'. 'I am a bit afraid that I have ended up in a lunatic house. Boullan jumps around like a tiger cat, holding his hosts. He calls upon Saint Michael and the eternal judges of eternal justice, then at the altar cries three times: Bring down Péladan, Bring down Péladan, Bring down Péladan! *It is done*, says Madame Thibault, her hands in her lap.'[1042] Instead of the Black Mass he might have expected, Huysmans ended up attending a ceremony of long-distance exorcism.

With respect to the 'angelic' marriage rites that had appalled the Parisian Rosicrucians, all circumstances indicate that Huysmans was not taken into the secret by Boullan. Indeed, even

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[1038] Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Arij Prins*, 200. Huysmans wrote about a similar condemnation in a letter to Gustave Boucher on 19 Augustus 1891: see Zayed, *Huysmans*, 449n.

[1039] Pierre Lambert, 'Un culte hérétique à Paris, 11, Rue de Sèvres: Avec des textes inédits de Huysmans,' *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques* 8 (1963): 190-205, here 194. Huysmans would utilize this note in his description of an experience with a succubus in his 1895 novel *En Route*.

[1040] Boullan to Huysmans, letter from 14 November 1890 quoted in Belval, *Des ténèbres à la lumière*, 88; see also ibidem, 89 and 120!

[1041] Letter from 21 September 1890; Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Arij Prins*, 203. The context suggest that Huysmans is talking about the chapter on the Black Mass here (chapter XIX). This however is followed by three more short chapters in the final version of *Là-Bas*. While it is possible that Huysmans changed his chapter division after September 1890, the last three chapters also provide much information on Dr. Johannès. A final conclusion must be suspended until more material is available.

[1042] Undated letter (July 1891) from Huysmans to Berthe de Courrière, quoted in André du Fresnois, *Une étape de la conversion de Huysmans: D'après des lettres inédites à M^me^ de C...* (Paris: Dorbon-Ainé, s.a. [1912]), 28. In a personal note, Boullan describes a similar 'spiritual battle' against the Rosicrucians on 11 Augustus 1890; see BnF, Fonds Lambert, 97/50.

as late as 1900, Huysmans would express his disbelief in what was said to be going on in the inner circle around the Abbé – although by then he had had ample opportunity to conclude that Boullan was a rather peculiar character.[1043] Be it as it may, it was somewhere in 1890 and around the time of his first visit to Lyons that the gradual process began that would transform Huysmans into a *de facto* sympathizer of Boullan and his combat against 'Satanism'. As Dr. Johannès, Boullan would make a star appearance in *Là-Bas*, while the Rosicrucians would be portrayed as rather clumsy yet willing Satanists. The colourful atmosphere that surrounded Boullan and his group will certainly have played its part in enchanting the weary Decadent writer. 'It's all so completely medieval,' he wrote to Prins shortly before his Lyons visit, 'It's like a dream come true, in days like these.'[1044]

Before we continue, a few words might be in place about the mysterious 'documents' concerning Satanism that Huysmans reported to have received from Boullan in great numbers. Satanism, it must be noted, played an important role in the theology of Boullan. The congregation he had formed during the earlier days of his activity was meant to practice 'the Work of Reparation of blaspheming and violation of the Sunday'.[1045] In keeping with general 'Reparationist' thinking, the 'blasphemies' intended were probably those perpetrated during the Revolution, or by the French secularised State, or by the French people, the most de-christianized nation of its day. Gradually however, Boullan had come to give this concept of blasphemy a more specific meaning. In small groups all over Europe, he maintained, devil-worshipping priests and their followers were systematically profaning the host to please Satan and his demons. The involvement of a properly ordained priest was essential, because, as Boullan wrote to Huysmans, only a priest could enact the consecration that was needed to ensure the presence of Christ in the host. 'To celebrate the Black Mass, that is to say, the satanic Mass, there is more needed than just sacrilege. The priest of the Black Mass has to have crossed what is called in magic the *threshold of Mystery*. This means, in good French, that this priest has to be *consecrated to Satan*.'[1046] Groups that practiced Satanism without a priest were forced to steal consecrated wafers from churches; and whole criminal networks were in existence to supply them with the object of their sacrileges, predominantly consisting of women who attended Mass under pretence of piety.

Boullan probably had found these ideas in Vintrasianism, for whose doctrines it likewise was of great importance. In this, as we shall see in the next chapter, they were part of a wider current in the substratum of Roman- Catholicism. In Vintrasianism, the concept of Satanism was not merely a device to point out the great iniquity of the times, but a lived and enacted element of religious ritual. In highly dramatic sessions that greatly resembled the 'Wagrams in the air' performed by Boullan, Vintras would do battle 'in the spirit' against the Satanists, disturbing their rites and rescuing the threatened body of Christ. The hosts that were maltreated by the Satanists miraculously materialized in the hands of the new Elijah, often

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[1043] In a letter to Adolphe Berthet from 1 May 1900, he suggested that nothing more had been going in than 'succubal excesses'; 'It was just a bunch of old folks for whom that game [i.e. physical sexuality] would have been unwise and without charm.' See Lambert,'Un culte hérétique à Paris,' 195 and Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 189. Bois, *Petites Religions*, 129-130, was of the same opinion. Huysmans had inherited Boullan's personal papers in 1896, among them the infamous 'Cahier rose'.

[1044] Letter from 24 July 1890, Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Arij Prins*, 200. In a letter published in the *Écho de Paris* 8 (18 April 1891) 2535:1, Huysmans described the entourage of Boullan in similar terms: their 'bonté' and 'delicatesse d'âme', he declared, 'me suggèrent l'idée de créatures oubliées sur le marge des ages, des créatures d'un autre temps.'

[1045] Jacquinot, 'En marge de J.-K. Huysmans,' 208.

[1046] Boullan to Huysmans, 10 December 1890; see Thomas, 'Un aventurier de la mystique,' 150-151; italics as in original. It is possible that Boullan makes an intentional pun on Guaita here, whose first publication on occultism was entitled *Au Seuil du mystère*, 'On the Treshold of Mystery'. Boullan possessed a copy of this book with a personal dedication by Guaita, according to Bricaud, *J.-K. Huysmans et le Satanisme*, 34-35n.

bleeding from the wounds that had been inflicted upon them, the blood sometimes forming wondrous patterns of esoteric symbols.[1047]

One of Vintras' own reports of these titanic battles has been left to us.[1048] In this remarkable document, Vintras tells how a secret occult council meets in 'a small town near Paris' in order to annihilate him. A letter written by Vintras serves to conduct his fluidic presence to the place where the Satanists convene, whose numbers are made up out of 'politicians, Dominicans and clergy'. They invoke the 'Omnipotent Intelligence', who reveals himself as the Egyptian god Amun-Ra. He tells them that he needs the sacrifice of the 'great God of the Christians', and of a virgin waiting in the next room, in order to be able to destroy the 'last prophet' of Christianity. The virgin is brought in, of course naked, and strangely enough attached to metal wires which enable the Satanists to control her in her state of catalepsy. An old priest is called in to accomplish the consecration of the host. He divests himself of his clothes as well and rises on an altar that has been prepared beforehand. Yet before he can speak the essential words, he suddenly petrifies, while the somnambular young girl is twisting and turning like a serpent. Urged on by the Satanists to perform the consecration, the priest tells them that he feels the presence of an invisible stranger in the room who prevents him from celebrating Mass. This invisible intruder is, of course, Vintras himself, spiritually intervening from his place of exile in London. The Satanists join forces to do battle against him and bring in a young man to serve as their medium; but the young man only falls on his knees to do homage to Vintras, the prophet 'who precedes the Great Justice', and turns himself like 'a new Balaam' against the Satanists, announcing that their magical operation has failed: 'Listen, princes and depositaries of the Church of Rome, and you malicious brutes who are in league with them, hypocrites who preach pity, prayer and faith from the moment that you rise from your bed till the moment that you go to sleep, hiding all the while the pressed oils of prostitution and decomposing corpses underneath your honorary vestments – shame on you, and glory to your enemy, the Great Prophet!'[1049]

Vintrasian anti-Satanism had almost certainly been the source of inspiration for Boullan's own ideas in this regard: and the 'documents' that the latter was sending to Huysmans mainly consisted of accounts like these from the old Vintrasian archives, and articles from his own hand from his former periodical *Les Annales de la Sainteté*.[1050] If we unravel this thread farther back in time, we can also trace the source where Vintras in all probability picked up *his* notion of a host-abusing network of Satanists. In 1835, in the small French town of Agen, a 35 years old woman known only as 'Virginie' had claimed to be possessed by the devil.[1051] After being abused by a priest – so she disclosed – she had sold her soul to the devil when she had been fifteen years old, amidst a Satanic congregation consisting of the 'most eminent citizens' of Agen. From that time at least, a society of Satanists had been continuously deploying its blasphemous practices in Agen, with another circle active in Bordeaux. The

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[1047] Éliphas Lévi , who met Vintras once, had seen some of these hosts and discerned an inverted pentagram on one of them, which made him decide that Vintrasism was satanic in nature. See. Lévi, *Clef des grands mystères*, 148-165, especially 161-163.

[1048] See the description in Jules Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie: Avec une étude de J.K. Huysmans* (Paris, Ernest Flammarion 1895), 201-207. Bois based himself on original documents from the Vintrasian archives, passed on to him by Huysmans, who did receive them from Boullan.

[1049] Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, 207.

[1050] An article titled 'Les périls des sociétés secrètes, et le moyen donné par le ciel pour les combattre,' *Annales de la Sainteté au XIX^e siècle* (April 1873) 39 :307-310, already gives details on the way to combat secret societies by Masses said by a 'trio of priests' that are strongly reminiscent of Vintras; 'Un coup d'œil sur une étude importante de la science sacrée,' *Annales de la Sainteté* (January 1875) 61 :68-72, talks about a secret society in Paris that brings homage 'to a living representation of Venus Astarte'.

[1051] This story was unearthed by Maurice Garçon, 'La société infernale d'Agen,' *Mercvre de France* (15 July 1928): 271-304, who based himself on a ms. Volume kept in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, 'L'Affaire d'Agen,' Fr. Nouv. Acq. 11.053.

devil regularly appeared in person at these assemblies, while sacred hosts were being abused on Massive scale.
When a priest started to exorcise Virginie, she began to vomit up hosts that had been abused by Satanists. Soon, a circle of pious women formed around the woman, who continued to vomit up an endless quantity of hosts, to the amazing total of three thousand, hundred forty of which were bleeding. In or around 1840, this circle of pious women had come in contact with the Vintrasists (who were still not officially excommunicated at that date), eventually forming a Vintrasian 'septaine' or congregation. Vintras was keenly interested in procuring one of the bleeding hosts, and soon after this started to 'receive' hosts harrowed by Satanists himself, keeping them in special boxes for the devotion of his followers. In a way, one can say that it had been this single episode that sparked the Vintrasian discourse on Satanism, and thus also spawned the avalanche of documents from Boullan that eventually resulted in *Là-Bas*.
The upheaval in Agen had also drawn the attention of the Church during the 1840s, and the bishop of Agen had ordered an investigation into the matter. In the report that ensued, it was pointed out that Virginie tended to remain vague when asked for the exact location of the 'temple of the demon' or the names of the 'eminent citizens' that frequented it: moreover, none of the facts that were pretended to be supernatural 'could survive five minutes of the most benign scrutiny'.[1052] The bishop condemned the woman in an ordinance of 6 July 1846, closing the book on the story of the Satanist congregations. The Vintrasians, however, retained their own mnemograph of the occurrences in Agen, which they articulated in their periodical *Voix de la Septaine*. Boullan transmitted the relevant article to Huysmans, and in this way, the story eventually ended up in *Là-Bas*. Referring explicitly to *La Voix de la Septaine*, Huysmans tells us that a Satanic association celebrated Black Masses, committed murders and polluted hosts for fifteen years without cease in Agen. 'And Monsignor the Bishop of Agen, who was a good, earnest prelate, never even attempted to deny that these monstrosities were committed in his diocese!'[1053]

the remarkable case of Chaplain Van Haecke & Canon Docre

For one particular Satanist, Huysmans did not rely on the documentation of Boullan. This was the real-life counterpart of the infamous Canon Docre. It was not the Prophet from Lyons who supplied him with the information on this essential character, but a woman called Berthe de Courrière (1852-1916). Huysmans had met this colourful lady at the place of her lover Remy de Gourmont (1858-1915), a much younger Symbolist writer whose face was weirdly disfigured by lupus vulgaris. Huysmans frequented the couple, and it had been de Courrière who had organized the spiritism séances that had impressed him so much. It had also been she who had brought him into contact with Boullan, although it is unclear how she had come to know him.[1054]
Not much is known with certainty about this central character to our story. Apparently she originated from Lille, in Northern France, and had come to Paris to be a model for the famous sculptor Auguste Clésinger, adding the aristocratically sounding suffix 'de' to her name. To these sparse biographical data, rumour added some salient facts. It was said she was 'into

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[1052] Garçon, 'La société infernale d'Agen,' 300-303.
[1053] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 74.
[1054] Biographical information about Courrière from Bossier, *Un personnage de roman*, 48 – see also the second Dutch-language edition of this book, Bossier, *Geschiedenis van een romanfiguur: De 'chanoine Docre' uit Là-Bas van J.-K. Huysmans* (Hasselt: Heideland, 1965), 66 – as well as Justin Saget, 'Notes pour servir à la Grande Histoire de la Vieille Dame,' *Cahiers du Collège de Pataphysique* (1952) 5-6: 17-23 (on page 9-16, some publications by Courrière from the *Mercvre de France* are reproduced). For Courrière and Boullan: Belval, *Des ténèbres à la lumière*, 73 (Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 131, claims that Guaita provided Huysmans with the address of Boullan). Clésinger eternalized de Courrière in the bust of the Republic in the French Senate. Introvign

priests' (meaning she wanted them to be into her), and that her apartment was furnished exclusively with ecclesiastical items – including a real pulpit topped by a De Sade volume bound like a Bible.[1055] A later story claims that she always carried one or more hallowed hosts in her handbag when she went out, to feed to the dogs when the occasion occurred.[1056] De Courrière certainly was fascinated with occultism, and she showed keen interest in Huysmans' quest for real-life Satanism. Huysmans kept her closely informed of his visits to Boullan's Carmel in Lyons. When he expressed his surprise over the fact that he had seen rituals performed by members of the 'regenerated sex' there, De Courrière mischievously urged him to take advantage of the 'proximity of celestified female organs': 'It would be regrettable if you would return without knowing more about the fine points of the doctrine of spiritual marriage.'[1057]

Perhaps it had been her predilection for priests that had brought De Courrière into contact with Lodewijk Van Haecke, the chaplain of the Chapel of the Precious Blood at Bruges, Belgium. According to one story, she had sought him out after seeing his photograph in a Paris shop window.[1058] A more plausible reading tells us she met him at the 1889 World Exposition in Paris, which featured among others the inauguration of the Eiffel Tower.[1059] In 1890 she decided, or was invited, to visit the chaplain in his town of residence, taking the minor Decadent poet and major morphine addict Edouard Dubus (1863-1895) along as a companion.[1060]

It is unclear what happened exactly during this fateful visit. On 23 September 1890, Gourmont sent a short message to Huysmans, telling him that he had received 'disturbing news' regarding Madame Courrière from Bruges; two days later, he added that she had undergone a 'very violent crisis', but was already recuperating and planning to go home. Gourmont had decided to go to Bruges to pick up his mistress and was busy making preparations for the trip. 'The chaplain has conducted himself extremely well in all this,' Gourmont commented; and on 2 October, he reported the reception of a letter from Van Haecke specifying further details.

Apparently, Berthe had experienced some kind of a nervous breakdown during her visit to the priest. She had fled his house and was found nearby by two policemen – according to most narrators of the tale in a state of near nakedness, while the only contemporary report on the incident only tells us that she was displaying 'signs of insanity' and 'performing all kinds of crazy tricks'. She was committed to the local psychiatric ward, where she was registered as

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[1055] Courrière's preference for clergy is hinted at in Pierre Dufay, 'L'Abbé Boullan et le 'Chanoine Docre',' *Mercvre de France* (15 March 1935) 882:509-527, here 523 ('Elle avait, paraît-il, l'obsession du prêtre'); see also Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 207, 233. The description of Courrière's interior is from Henry de Groux, as quoted in Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 138

[1056] The story of the hosts in Courrière's handbag is attributed to Madame Rachilde, the wife of the director of the *Mercvre de France*, and was transmitted in a letter by Joanny Bricaud to Herman Bossier – see the latter's *Un personnage de roman*, 60. It may have been invented by Bricaud. In the chapter devoted to 'Mme Berthe de C…' in Rachilde's *Alfred Jarry ou le surmâle de lettres* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1928), 43-66, she only tells that Courrière 'procurait […] des hosties pour messe noire, et de nouveaux fidèles aux prêtres de bonne volonté' – and even this unsubstantiated allegation, published thirty years *post factum*, may originate from an overly rash backwards projection of Huysmans' description of Madame Chantelouve in *Là-Bas*. The same chapter also cites a love letter from De Courrière to Jarry, which, when authentic, clearly shows her to be at home in the vocabulary of neo-Lévian occultism and fin de siècle Symbolism (ibidem, 61-66).

[1057] Courrière to Huysmans, 27 July 1891, Bnf, Fonds Lambert, 30/5 (12); quoted by Lambert, 'En marge de 'Là-Bas',' 303-304.

[1058] Dufay, 'L'Abbé Boullan et le 'Chanoine Docre',' 524.

[1059] Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Arij Prins*, 182n.

[1060] On Dubus, see Leon Bocquet, 'Édouard Dubus (1863-1895),' *Le Nord littéraire et artistique* (19 January 1928): 10-11.

being apprehended in a 'state of delirium' and diagnosed with 'grave hysterics'.[1061] The medical report did not specify what had caused Berthe de Courrière to succumb to mental collapse and flee the house in disarray. On this, however, de Courrière would have had her own, highly extraordinary tale to tell. On 9 October, Gourmont had arrived in Bruges and wrote 'from this town so deliciously dead' to tell Huysmans that he 'would have strange stories to listen to' when they would return: 'There are infamous priests other than in Paris or Châlons!'[1062] The exact content of the 'strange stories' Gourmont promised has not been left to us, but evidently, they convinced Huysmans of the fact that Van Haecke was a redoubtable Satanist who had maliciously lured de Courrière into his den of iniquity, from which the horrified lady had only barely managed to escape.
Huysmans wrote about Van Haecke to Boullan, this time furnishing Boullan with information on Satanism, instead of the other way around.[1063] Boullan was hesitant at first, although by strange coincidence he had already mentioned Bruges as one of the focal points of European Satanism in his most early letters. In a letter written on 15 October, he suggested that 'the chaplain Van Eyck' might have been the victim of a magical operation instead of its perpetrator; apart from that, some simple sexual misstep might have been involved. As more information became available, he quickly changed his mind. Early November, the doctor seemed to be completely convinced of Van Haecke's Satanism, adding his own hypothesis about why the Belgian chaplain would have lured Berthe de Courrière into his house: 'One evening, this man was trembling, saying: I am afraid, I am afraid. This was because he knew that the measure of his iniquities was about to be filled. […] In making an *innocent person* his accomplice, he created a lightning-conductor for himself. The innocence of the lady covers the crimes of the pervert.'[1064] In the same letter in which he depicted a trembling Van Haecke, Boullan also told about a new evil force he had encountered during his spiritual battles. One night, he had been attacked by two gatherings of magicians at the same time, one presided by Guaita, another by Papus, when suddenly Madame Thibault had discerned a dark spirit coming from yet another direction. 'It was a messenger from Bruges. That reminded me of the satanizing Chaplain.' Later on, Péladan had also joined the battle, which had taken two hours. On 10 December 1890, Boullan also claimed to have prevented Van Haecke from offering a Black Mass.[1065]

Van Haecke, Huysmans would later claim, had been the real-life model for Canon Docre. Nevertheless, the canon from *Là-Bas* and the chaplain from Bruges do not seem to be completely identical: the former, for instance, is described as a confessor of a Spanish queen in exile, something Van Haecke had never been. Huysmans, it might be remembered, already had been looking for a 'demonizing and sodomitical priest' in February 1890, and the detailed description of Docre's activities in the novel are not paralleled by the rather meagre facts

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[1061] 'Een dame van 38 jaar, geboren te Rijssel en wonende te Parijs, is Maandag morgen langs de Smedevest te Brugge door de policie in verzekering weggebracht, daar zij teekens van krankzinnigheid gaf en allerhande zotte keuren uitrichtte.' – short notice in *Burgerwelzijn* (Brugge), 10 September 1890; quoted by Herman Bossier, *Geschiedenis van een Romanfiguur: De 'Chanoine Docre' uit 'Là-Bas' van J.-K. Huysmans* (Brussel: De Lage Landen, 1942), 47; and in his *Un personnage de roman* on p.51. The register of the Sint Juliaansgesticht is referred to on p. 49, respectively p. 53-54 of the same works. Her state of undress is remarked upon by Thomas, 'Un aventurier de la mystique,' 146, among others; see also Bossier, *Un personnage de roman*, 55, who cites an 'anonymous priest' as source.
[1062] Letters from Gourmont to Huysmans deriving from 'Lettres adressées pour la plupart à J.K. Huysmans,' BnF, Fonds Lambert, 28/25, and quoted in Pierre Lambert, 'Annexes au dossier Van Haecke-Berthe Courrière: Lettres inédites de Gourmont et de Firmin Vanden Bosch à Joris-Karl Huysmans,' *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques* 8 (1963):180-189, here 182-184.
[1063] Thomas, 'Un aventurier de la mystique,' 146-151.
[1064] This and preceding letter quoted in Thomas, 'Un aventurier de la mystique,' 147-149.
[1065] Thomas, 'Un aventurier de la mystique,' 149-151.

Huysmans collected on Van Haecke. It is probable that Huysmans had already finished the portrait of Docre in its main outlines when the incident with Van Haecke presented itself, and applied Docre's attributes to the Belgian chaplain instead of the other way around. Yet in a letter to a magazine written shortly after the publication of *Là-Bas*, Huysmans would unambiguously identify 'a priest who still exercises his sacerdotal dignity in Belgium, in a town not far from Gand' as one of the principal models for Docre.[1066]

In 1895, he added further detail in a preface he wrote for Jules Bois' book on Satanism. Here he proclaimed to possess 'renewed, incessant, undisputable verifications' that there were 'certain priests' who had formed diabolical circles to celebrate the Black Mass. 'Such is that Canon Docre whose portrait appeared from time to time in the shop window of a photographer on the corner of the Rue de Sèvres and the Place de Croix-Rouge. This man has assembled, in Belgium, a demonical clan of young people. He attracts them by their curiosity for experiences that aim to discover 'the unknown forces in nature' – for that is the eternal excuse of those who are caught in *delictu flagrante* of Satanism – then he retains them by the attraction of women that he hypnotizes and sumptuous meals, and little by little corrupts and unsettles them with aphrodisiacs that they absorb under the guise of nut *confiture*. Finally, when the neophyte is ripe, he throws them into the Sabbath and mingles them with his herd of horrible sheep.' He went on to tell how 'one of the victims' of Docre had told him how he was trembling at night, crying 'I am afraid, I am afraid'[1067] – the story Boullan had written him in one of his letters.

Meanwhile, in Bruges, nobody seemed to have noticed that Satanist orgies were being held in the confines of their city, and what was worse, by the keeper of the town's most famous holy shrine. Van Haecke was generally loved by his townsmen, among which he enjoyed a reputation of being not only a saintly priest, but also a bit of a prankster. Several booklets appeared during and after his lifetime in which his numerous merry tricks were recounted. 'He has gotten many a wise guy into heaven with a joke, when they were already grinning at the gates of Hell,' a Flemish periodical remarked in its obituary article on Van Haecke.[1068] Huysmans visited Bruges in 1897 and was confronted with Van Haecke's special reputation when he asked around for the chaplain. 'Everybody smiles when Van Haecke is mentioned,' the French writer noted in his personal travel log, 'He is so funny, says a bookseller with ribbons in her hair. He says Mass from time to time, says the sacristan of Saint Jacques. He is called extravagant, jocose; fun incarnated.'[1069] Huysmans failed to encounter his nemesis and contented himself with a brief glimpse at Van Haecke's living quarters: '31 Rue de Marécage – close to that Saint Jacques Church, at a little square – a sealed house, with yellow window-panes, the colour of houses that were shunned during the Middle Ages.'

By then, Huysmans had taken formal action against Van Haecke as well. For some years, he had been in contact with a Belgian nobleman, baron Firmin Vanden Bosch, and a Flemish

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[1066] *Echo de Paris* 8 (18 April 1891 2535 :1. The other model was of course the chaplain of the exiled queen, who already had committed suicide. In a private letter to Charles Buet dated 17 April 1891(Zayed, *Huysmans*, 445), Huysmans also denied that Boullan was Docre; 'c'est le chanoine V.H. qui reside à Bruges, un terrible prêtre, allez !' A similar statement can be found in a letter to Prins from 30 March 1892 (Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Arij Prins*, 237: A Bruges, il y a un chanoine du précieux sang qui m'a, il est vrai, servi pour mon chanoine Docre, mais qui est autrement fort que le mien. Malheureusement, les meilleurs renseignements me sont venus après l'apparition de mon livre.' Frédéric Boutet, *Tableau de l'au-delà* (Paris: Gallimard, 1927), 137-138 claims that Canon Roca was the principal source of inspiration for Docre, but he is the only one to defend this hypothesis.

[1067] Huysmans in Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, xix-xxx.

[1068] The obituary appeared in *Biekorf: Leer- en leesblad voor alle verstandige Vlamingen* (Zaaimaand 1912); I quote from Bossier, *Geschiedenis van een Romanfiguur*, 37. For biographical information on Van Haecke, see Bossier, *Un personnage de roman*, 33-41.

[1069] This and following quotation from Massignon, 'Huysmans devant la 'confession' de Boullan,' 47. Also quoted in Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 256.

priest called Henry Mœller. To the baron, Vanden Bosch would later assert, Huysmans told a story about how he had seen Van Haecke once during a Black Mass that he had witnessed. He had not known who the priest was at that moment, but later, by coincidence, stumbled upon his photograph in a Paris bookshop. Because the woman that attended to the book shop had refused to sell him the picture, Huysmans had gone back later and apparently stolen the photograph. In this way, he had found out that the priest at the Black Mass had been Van Haecke. At some later date, Huysmans claimed, he had confronted Van Haecke with his presence at such a blasphemous ceremony. The priest, who 'seemed to distrust' Huysmans, reacted evasive, but eventually responded 'Don't I have the right to be curious? And who can say that I wasn't there as a spy?'[1070]

Firmin Vanden Bosch did some research on the affair, and concluded that Huysmans' allegations were 'at the very least *plausible'* and that nothing did invalidate them. Nevertheless he advised him in January 1896 to keep silent on the matter for the time being. 'It would be regrettable to be compromised in a campaign that, at the moment, cannot be crowned with a formal and proven accusation,' he wrote in January 1896.[1071] At the request of Vanden Bosch, Huysmans compiled a twelve-page memorandum on Van Haecke that was passed on to the Belgian ecclesiastical authorities by the Belgian baron. Although a high-ranking member of the Belgian clergy contacted Vanden Bosch to ask questions about its contents, nothing further was heard from this. The memorandum itself disappeared completely: covered up, according to Huysmans, by a corrupt or cowardly hierarchy that did not want Van Haecke's double life as a Satanist to become public knowledge.[1072]

intermediary conclusions

Was Huysmans' discovery of Satanism fact or fiction? In the historiography of this episode, this is still a matter of debate. While some historians blankly deny that Huysmans ever had anything to do with real Satanism (not always with a wealth of evidence), others think that his depiction may contain a kernel of truth.[1073] This is not merely a matter of detail. Most of the

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[1070] Bossier, *Un personnage de roman* 71-72. Michel de Lézinier, *Avec Huysmans: Promenades et souvenirs* (Paris: André Delpeuch, 1928), 207-209, recounts how Huysmans showed him a photograph of 'Docre' around 1900. There is no indication that Huysmans ever met Van Haecke, although he may have glimpsed him when he spent a few days in Bruges in 1902 for an exhibition of Primitive painters. 'The place is exquisite as ever,' he wrote to his friend Leon Leclaire in remarkably off-hand fashion, 'And in the course of my walk I caught a glimpse of Van Eycke [sic] with his snow-white locks.' (Quoted in Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 312). The stories attested by Vanden Bosch may have been made up or incorrectly transmitted by either Huysmans or Vanden Bosch himself. There are some clues that Van Haecke was not unfamiliar with occultists circles, however: Péladan was quoted in a newspaper interview as claiming that he had dined a few times with the model of Docre, 'un doux illuminé, incapable de vouloir du mal à une mouche'('Chez le Sar,' *Le Jour* (28 April 1891): 1-2).

[1071] Vanden Bosch to Huysmans, 23 July 1895 and 30 January 1896; 'Documents relatifs au satanisme,' BnF, Fonds Lambert, 30/4 (3); Lambert, 'Annexes au dossier Van Haecke-Berthe Courrière,' 186, 189.

[1072] Bossier, *Un personnage de roman*, 73-74, 143-144. See also the rather hazy letter by Huysmans to Mœller from 20 February 1896; Henry Mœller, 'Joris-Karl Huysmans d'après sa correspondence,' *Durendal: Revue Catholique d'Art et de Littérature* 5 (1908): 444.

[1073] As witnesses *pro* Huysmans, we may cite, in the first place, Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 137: 'Toutefois, sauf à considérer Huysmans comme totalement insincère et à disqualifier aussi un grand nombre de documents […], il faut admettre que la messe noire de Huysmans, que celui-ci y ait personnellement assisté ou non, est décrite, au moins dans ses grandes lignes, de façon plausible […].' – cf. also 142, where Introvigne argues that it is precisely the vagueness and incompleteness of his documentation that makes it plausible that Huysmans was describing real Satanism: 'C'est cette obscurité même qui nous laisser penser que nous sommes alors, pour de bon, en présence de satanistes.' In his article 'Satanism' in the *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 2:1035, Introvigne also unequivocally assumes the veracity of Huysmans' report; in his article on Huysmans in the same publication, 1:579-580, he seems more circumspect, but nevertheless designates Huysmans' novels and correspondence as 'important references'. Other believers include Dubois, *Jules Bois*, 52 ('[Huysmans] avait, il est vrai, fréquenté le milieu sataniste'; Lyons, *Satan Wants You*, 59 [= *Second Coming*,

authors propounding the existence of a practised fin-de-siècle Satanism flesh up their accounts with references to Huysmans. This circumstance alone more than justifies a closer look at the material Huysmans presents us. A lot has already been suggested in the preceding sections: now it is time to draw some explicit conclusions.

Huysmans himself was ambiguous about his possible first-hand knowledge of Satanist practices. When asked about it, he sometimes declared that Durtal had confessed in *En Route* – referring to the sequel on *Là-Bas* in which Durtal converts to Catholicism and tells a priest about his attendance of the black Mass, as well as his subsequent defilement of the host with Chantelouve.[1074] Huysmans' friends and relations recorded highly divergent assertions on the subject from the writer's mouth. His friend Léon Hennique would remember forty years after the event how Huysmans told him that he had attended a Black Mass and been horrified by what he saw.[1075] We already quoted Firmin VandenBosch's reminiscences, also recorded forty years post factum by the Belgian journalist Herman Bossier. The baron's account was spiced up with some remarkable details, for instance the fact that the Satanist gathering had been divided in two rows, one for women and one for men. Arthur Mugnier, on the other hand, the priest who played a significant role in Huysmans' eventual conversion to Catholicism, maintained that the writer had categorically denied that he had ever attended a Black Mass towards the end of his life: the description in *Là-Bas* was entirely based on documents provided by Boullan.[1076] Finally, we may quote, for curiosity's sake, the testimony of Léon Bloy (1846-1917), Huysmans' former literary brother in arms, who claimed that the latter had plagiarized two thirds of his novel from the expositions he had given to him on the esoteric.[1077]

82]: 'It is more than likely that parts of the ceremony that Huysmans described did have a basis in reality'; Massignon, 'Huysmans devant la 'confession' de Boullan' (and other publications); Rita Thiele, *Satanismus als Zeitkritik bei Joris-Karl Huysmans* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter D. Lang, 1979), 10, 101-104; Zacharias, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe* 140: 'Huysmans wohnte aber auch unzweifelhaft mindestens einmal einer der eigentlichen Schwarzen Messen bei, die regelmäßig in der Nähe seiner Wohnung (Rue de Sèvres) abgehalten wurden'; Zayed, *Huysmans*, 424-465 (with some ambiguity). From the non-academic literature, copious references could be given; see for instance Bricaud, *J.K. Huysmans et le satanisme*, 7, *Huysmans, Occultiste et Magicien*, 20 ('Husymans avait bien assisté à une des messes noires'), who is followed by Boutet, *Tableau de l'au-delà*, 173; Buet, *Grands Hommes en Robe de Chambre*, 233 ('bonnes sources'); Koomen, *Het ijzige zaad van de duivel*, 136; Wenisch, *Satanismus*, 23; Rhodes, *The Satanic Mass*, 167: 'Despite his [Huysmans'] unwillingness or inability to produce documentary and direct evidence, it is difficult to doubt the essential truth of his reports even presented as they are in the guise of fiction.'

Contra: Dufay, 'L'Abbé Boullan et le 'Chanoine Docre',' 524; Medway, *Lure of the Sinister*, 88-89 (yet without giving any real argumentation); Schmidt, *Satanismus*, 108-109; 'Huysmans beschreibt […] verschiedene Typen des Satanismus, die in die Realität so sicher nie existiert haben […] ein immer wieder behauptete Augenzeugenschaft Huysmans bei einer solchen schwarzen Messe konnte indes nie nachgewiesen werden.'

[1074] Frick, *Die Satanisten*, 2:194-195, citing the not always very reliable Bricaud as his source.

[1075] Frédéric Lefèvre, 'Une heure avec M. Léon Hennique de l'Académie Goncourt,' *Les Nouvelles Littéraires, artistiques et scientifiques* 9 (10 mai 1930) 395:1-2, here 2.

[1076] Mugnier is quoted in Paul-Antoine-Honoré Rolland, *Étude psychopathologique sur le Mysticisme de J.-K. Huysmans* (Nice: Imprimerie de l'Éclaireur du Nice, 1930), 10. Mœller, 'Joris-Karl Huysmans d'après sa correspondence,' 443-44, drew the same conclusions.

[1077] Bloy claimed in an article published 1 June 1891 in *La Plume* that Huysmans owed 'three quarters of his book' to him. He returned to the subject in an article entitled 'L'Expiation de Jocrisse', published 24 January 1893 in *Gil Blas*; reprints in Léon Bloy, *Sur Huysmans* (Bruxelles, Éditions Complexe 1986), 131, 144. See also Richard Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution. The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870-1914* (London: Constable, 1966), 140-143.

Bloy's allegations inspired a French historian of literature to claim the Bloy was in reality a Luciferian; cf. Raymond Barbeau, *Un prophète luciférien: Léon Bloy* (Aubier: Éditions Montaigne, 1957). Although this book (to put it bluntly) seems to be that of a raving fanatic and was justly ignored by more serious Bloy critics, the citations Barbeau gives from Bloy's writings do suggest some influence of Romantic Satanism and deserve further study.

It is probable that Huysmans remained deliberately vague on the factual background of *Là-Bas*, both to retain the mystery that was one of the novel's major selling points, and to mask the lack of precisely such a factual background. If we look at the evidence that is preserved to us from the period that Huysmans actually composed *Là-Bas*, we do not find the slightest indication that he ever had first-hand acquaintance with any kind of Satanism. When he discovered 'Satanist priest' Boullan – who in the end turned out to be not so Satanist after all – he wrote enthusiastic reports to several of his correspondents. Yet to no one did he send any enthusiastic reports of a visit to a Satanist congregation. Even to Arij Prins he did not utter one word about this, although Huysmans kept his Dutch friend informed about every stage of the construction of *Là-Bas* and wrote to him about virtually every occurrence in his life, including venereal disease and brothel adventures. It is unlikely that Huysmans would not have told Prins immediately if he had actually witnessed a Black Mass.

Of the sources upon which Huysmans *did* base himself, much has already been said in the preceding sections. We will recapitulate once more in a more systematic way. Among the 'documentation' utilized by Huysmans, we must mention in the very first place, once again, the primacy of literary sources. Even the most superficial reader will have recognized an adaptation in prose of Baudelaire's famous 'Litanies de Satan' in Canon Docre's speech during the Black Mass – although, it must be admitted, Baudelaire could well have been a source of inspiration for any real-life Satanists too.[1078] Even more crucial is Michelet, whose shadow looms large over Huysmans' entire project. Huysmans reread *La Sorcière* shortly before he started to write *Là-Bas*, and although he expressed himself critically on the historian (particularly with regard to the latter's 'sentimental' democratic tendencies), the influence of the nestor's work is undeniable.[1079] In many respects, the black Mass in *Là-Bas* is a modern re-enactment of Michelet's Witches' Sabbath, with the 'priestess' mounting a virile Jesus out of a Felix Rops engraving instead of a phallic statue of Pan. More in general, the whole concept of an ecstatic anti-religion of the flesh is taken straight from Michelet and transplanted by Huysmans to the present time.

Except from secondary literature, Huysmans could dispose of a great abundance of more specialized works from the vaults of the French Bibliothèque Nationale. His friend Remy Gourmont held a desk job at the library and provided Huysmans with relevant references; for instance to the demonological treatises which are quoted at length in *Là-Bas*, as well as to the Affaire de Poisons, on which Huysmans was well-informed. We do not need to have too grand an idea about Huysmans' erudition in these matters, though: most of the quotations from the demonologies could have been derived just as easily from popular digests as that of the 'Bibliophile Jacob'.[1080] All in all, Huysmans' literary and historic sources alone could have provided more than enough material for his Romanesque construction of Satanism and the Black Mass. 'It was me who searched for details concerning that fantastic ceremony,' Gourmont later claimed. 'I did not find them, because they are not there. Finally, Huysmans arranged into a Black Mass the famous scene of conjuration […] for which Montespan lent her body to the obscene role-playing act of an infamous sorcerer.'[1081]

Gourmont's statement needs qualifying, however. As we have seen, another important source for Huysmans was Joseph Boullan and the documents the former priest provided from what he rather pompously called his 'archives'. In Boullan, we easily recognize the 'most

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[1078] Huysmans, *A Rebours*, 114, refers to Baudelaire's 'Litanies de Satan'.

[1079] Huysmans to Prins, 22 November 1889: 'J'ai acheté le Michelet – Au fond, ça perd à être relu.' Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Arij Prins*, 177.

[1080] Garçon, 'La société infernale d'Agen,' 271. 'Le Bibliophile Jacob' was the pseudonym of the French librarian Paul Lacroix; his *Curiosités des sciences occultes* was published in 1885 by Garnier fréres in Paris.

[1081] Gourmont, 'Souvenirs sur Huysmans,' 15-16.

mysterious of healers' that Huysmans had mentioned as the principal source for his revelations on Satanism when the first instalment of *Là-Bas* had been published. While the information from Gourmont would by its nature refer to the past, the prophet from Lyons furnished Huysmans with the documentation on contemporary Satanism that was essential for the project of *Là-Bas*.

Boullan classified the documents he sent to Huysmans in three categories. In the first place, he distinguished 'documents from the first order', with which he meant texts deriving 'from he who preceded me in the path', i.e. Vintras. These consisted almost exclusively of accounts of visions by the 'New Elijah'. Documents from the second order contained information originating from Boullan himself, mostly 'visionary' in nature as well, while the third order stemmed from a variety of third party sources.[1082] Some of these original documents remain, allowing us to retrace many of the more salient elements in Huysmans' description of Satanism to their original source with Boullan or even Vintras.[1083] The strange idea of an international organisation called 'Ré-théurgistes optimates' and led by the American poet Longfellow was copied by Huysmans straight from a letter by Boullan from February 1890.[1084] Boullan, in turn, had lifted it from a vision reported by Vintras and dated 26 June 1855. Vintras here already formulated the idea of a 'Rétheurgie absolue' with ramifications in France, Italy, Germany, Turkey, Austria and Russia and its centre in 'the heart of America' (the peculiar notion that it was headed by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882), author of *The Song of Hiawatha*, seems to have been a creative addition by Boullan himself).[1085] In the same vision, Vintras also told about two competing societies, 'one striving to dominate the universe by limitless destruction; the other wanting to maintain its universal omnipotence by leading back the world to a purely philosophical cult of which they will be the Doctors and High Priests', as well as the fact that they had selected a young girl to become the mother of the Antichrist in a special ceremony, an event that was predicted by Vintras for the 'tenth of the next month', i.e. 10 July 1855.[1086] All these elements would eventually find their way into *Là-Bas* by the intermediation of Boullan. The fidelity of the ex-priest's renderings was actually surprisingly high, but he did not hesitate to add extra colour or information to Vintras' stories once in a while. Although Vintras' accounts do feature Satan and Satanists on occasion, the secret organisations he is fighting against look more like a strange assembly of spiritism and neo-paganism invoking ancient gods like Amun-Ra and Juno: the unusual designation 'Ré-théurgistes optimates' probable means something like 'High Theurgists of Ra'.[1087] Boullan 'satanized' the sect a bit and also provided Huysmans with updated

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[1082] Boullan to Huysmans, 18 February 1890, BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 61-62 = Fonds Lambert 76, f. 53.

[1083] The bulk of the letters and 'documents' that Boullan sent to Huysmans for the documentation of his novel are kept in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596; they derive from the estate of Jules Bois, to whom Huysmans had transmitted them as documentation for his publication on Satanism (see further on for more information on this). Pierre Lambert, at some date, had them photographed (BnF, Fonds Lambert, 97), and afterwards copied them in his own hand (BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76). Whenever I have been able to retrace them, I will give references to all three document collections. As already noted earlier, many more letters from Boullan must still remain in the Vatican Library; a few other autographs can be found in the collection Lambert (Fonds Lambert, 30/5). The Fonds Lambert also contains some accounts by Vintras of his visions deriving from the entourage of Boullan and copied by hand by one of his followers, Pascal Misme (BnF, Fonds Lambert, 123-126).

[1084] Document from Boullan to Huysmans entitled 'Les Ré-Théurgistes Optimates', BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 64 = BnF, Fonds Lambert 76, f. 49.

[1085] Eugène Vintras, 'Récit des Nuits de saint Joseph, 1855,' BnF, Fonds Lambert, 123, p. 139-176, there p. 140: 'La France, L'Italie, L'Allemagne, la Turquie, l'Autriche et la Russie ont des ramifications qui se relient à un grand centre établi dans le cœur de l'Amérique.'

[1086] Vintras, 'Récit des Nuits de saint Joseph, 1855,' p. 140-141: 'les uns prétendent dominer l'univers par une destruction sans limites; les autres veulent conserver leur omnipotence universelle, en ramenant le monde à un culte purement philosophique dont ils seront les Docteurs et les grands Prêtres.'

[1087] This etymology was already suggested by Legge, 'Devil-worship and freemasonry,' 472n. Vintras, 'Récit

information on its current activities. In a letter from 16 July 1890, for instance, he informed Huysmans that *Holland* was another major power centre of the Réthéurgistes optimates; on 23 July, he added, somewhat surprisingly, that the secret society had all but dispersed since the death of Longfellow in 1882 – the 'Centre of the Grand Masters' was now located in Rome.[1088] To other material of Vintras, Boullan occasionally also gave a touch of his own, usually by adding details of a sexual nature.[1089]

In addition to the (slightly retouched) accounts of Vintras, Boullan's own descriptions of the practices of the Satanists were of great importance as a source for Huysmans. On 4 September 1890, Boullan had sent the French writer a piece entitled 'Documents on the Black Mass of our days'.[1090] All elements that Huysmans would use in his depiction of Docre's Black Mass can already be found in this letter: the 'diabolical' incense, the glorification of Satan by a long series of blasphemies, the priest who is naked underneath his robes, the practise of sodomy and incest during the black Mass, the mixing of semen and menstrual fluid with wine, the sacrilege of the host 'by every impure contact'. Boullan had come to know all these secret facts, he had disclosed in an earlier letter, because many years ago (in 1863, in Rouen), he had seen a 'Ritual of the Grand Masters in Satanic Magic' written on parchment consecrated to Satan and bound in the skin of an unbaptized baby, with a profaned host glued to its first page.[1091] Huysmans did not only faithfully reconstruct Boullan's ritual specifications for the Black Mass in his novel, he included this improbable story as well. And this was just one of the many instances that he inserted Boullan's texts in *Là-Bas*, sometimes almost to the letter.[1092]

As his third category suggests, Boullan also provided Huysmans with references to other sources. Some of them were again his own: he made frequent references to his own articles in *Annales de la Sainteté au XIX^e siècle*, which provided information on magic attacks and Satanist thefts of hosts.[1093] But he also referred to other authors, mostly from the deep backwaters of French Roman Catholicism from which he originated himself. An interesting example is M. J. C. Thorey's *Rapports merveilleux de Mme Cantianille B… avec le monde*

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des Nuits de saint Joseph, 1855,' p. 172 en p. 174 speaks simply of a 'société des Théurgistes Optimates', but on p. 141, Vintras already used the phrase 'Rétheurgie absolue' (as well as 'nouveau Magisme évocateur').

[1088] Boullan to Huysmans, 16 July 1890, BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 97-98 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 129-137; ibidem, 23 July 1890, BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 100-102 = BnF, Fonds Lambert 97, f. 60-65 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 153-161.

[1089] Compare Vintras' account of a Black Mass dated 4 February 1842 (BnF, Fonds Lambert, 125, f. 68-71), with Boullan's rendering in a letter to Huysmans from 15 February 1855 (BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 63 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 55).

[1090] Boullan, 'Documents sur la Messe Noire, de nos jours,' BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 119-120 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 219-223.

[1091] Boullan to Huysmans, 18 July 1890, BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 92-95 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 97, f. 51-52 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 139-141.

[1092] Some examples: remarks about the importance of the involvement of a consecrated priest in satanic magic, and the corresponding weakness in power of the (unconsecrated) Rosicrucians – Boullan to Huysmans, 20 February 1890, BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 66 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 59-61; about the involvement of certain members of the Parisian clergy in Satanism – Boullan to Huysmans, 12 July 1890 (with documents on the 'délicate'), BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 90-91 = BnF Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 123-127; about Boullan's eviction from the Roman- Catholic Church – Boullan to Huysmans, 10 July 1890, BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 85-86 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 109-117; as well as some minor elements, as for instance the references to the 'protective' chapel of Notre Dame de l'Épine – Boullan to Huysmans, 5- 6 August 1890, BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 116-117 – and the story about the diabolised statues given to a church by a rural nobleman – Boullan to Huysmans, BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 89 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 123-127.

[1093] Cf. Boullan, 'Un coup d'œil sur une étude importante de la science sacrée,' (magic attacks) and 'Des crimes qui mettent en péril la société et du remède divine à y apporter,' *Annales de la Sainteté* (April 1875) 64:307-311 (host thefts). Boullan refrerred to these articles in 'Documents sur la Messe Noire, de nos jours' (BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 119-120 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 219-223). A manuscript note from the Collection Lambert, probably composed by Remy de Gourmont for Huysmans, also makes reference to the *Annales de la Sainteté* (BnF, Fonds Lambert, 30/5).

surnaturel ('The Miraculous Contacts of Miss Cantianille B… with the Supernatural World', 1866), which had been recommended by Boullan as a reliable account of 'what is in our days the Mass of the Sabbath'.[1094] The 2-volume work gave an account of the tribulation of the young congregation member Cantianille B…, as reported to her confessor, Charles Thorey. At a tender age, Miss Cantianille recounted, she had fallen into the evil hands of an 'association of possessed' that dated back to the French Revolution, to be exact to 1793, when it had been founded on the exact day that Louis XVI had been guillotined. Robespierre had been its first president, and other prominent revolutionaries like Marat and Danton had been members; but surprisingly enough, the society did not mix with politics: God would not allow this, Cantianille assured, as their ability to render themselves invisible would make its members invulnerable plotters.[1095] Instead, they influenced society by way of nefarious literature and 'impious novels'. In addition, they performed rites of sacrilege involving stolen or surreptitiously collected hosts. On these occasions, they convened at places like grottos, ruins of castles and churches, and lonely mountain tops, as well as in the Roman Coliseum (to mock the martyrs) and at Bethlehem (to mock the Nativity).[1096] Her own career in this clandestine world, Cantianille asserted, had began when a corrupted, devious priest had brought her into contact with a demon named Ossian (sic). When she became sixteen, the young girl had made a pact with Lucifer in person; she subsequently had descended into hell, where Lucifer had nominated her as the new president of the secret society, in which capacity she had commanded 'several thousand' followers.[1097] In a postscript, Charles Thorey added some impressive facts about his own activities, one of the most remarkable being his successful conversion of the demon Beelzebuth, who had adopted the Christian name Charles.[1098] Despite the colourful character if this account, it inspired at least one element of *Là-Bas*: the tattooed cross on the foot soles of Docre originates with Cantianille/Thorey, who ascribe it to the members of their 'association of possessed'.[1099]

It seems hardly necessary to comment on the trustworthiness of this kind of sources.[1100] In the preceding sections, most of the essential has already been said about the nature of the 'documentation' provided by Boullan. The core of the material consisted of information of a 'visionary' origin: observations and encounters 'in the spirit' by Vintras and Boullan. While every reader must decide for him- or herself what weight he or she will lend to paranormal evidence, there is no further indication that the Satanism they described had any foundation in reality. Huysmans nevertheless evidently considered Boullan a major and trustworthy source, incorporating passages from Boullan's letters in about twenty places in his novel.[1101] The correspondence between the writer and the spiritual leader, moreover, clearly indicates that Huysmans sent his finished chapters to Boullan for further scrutiny. The latter especially lauded Huysmans' portrayal of Dr. Johannès, and at one point even suggested entire dialogues for his book.[1102]

[1094] Letter by Boullan to Huysmans, 18 February 1890, BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 57: 'ce qu'est de nos jours la Messe du Sabbat'.

[1095] M. J. C. Thorey, *Rapports merveilleux de Mme Cantianille B… avec le monde surnaturel*. 2 vols. (Paris: Louis Hervé, 1866), 40n.

[1096] Thorey, *Rapports merveilleux de Mme Cantianille B…*, 43.

[1097] Thorey, *Rapports merveilleux de Mme Cantianille B…*, 37-39.

[1098] Thorey, *Rapports merveilleux de Mme Cantianille B…*, 139-161.

[1099] Thorey, *Rapports merveilleux de Mme Cantianille B…*, 42: 'Quelques-uns avaient poussé l'impiété jusqu'à se tatouer, sous les pieds, l'image de la croix afin de marcher dessus constamment.'

[1100] Amazingly, Introvigne considers Cantianille B… as part of a 'série d'indices convergents sur l'activité, en France particulièrement, de vrais satanistes'; the veracity of Vintras' visions, he acknowledges, is more difficult to judge; 'Mais ils fournissent suffisamment de détails pour être jugés souvent fiables.' Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 141-142, 105.

[1101] Thomas, 'Un aventurier de la mystique,' 143-145.

[1102] Letter by Boullan to Huysmans, 10 July 1890, BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 85-86 = BnF, Fonds

Boullan and books provided the bulk of Huysmans' raw material for *Là-Bas*. 'My priest continues to send me documents with a dedication that baffles me,' he wrote to Prins on 17 May 1890, 'And on the other side, the National Library is combed out for me with fury.'[1103] Apart from these, there was the case of Van Haecke, the Satanist chaplain from Belgium. Yet the evidence for Van Haecke's Satanism is slim at best and entirely dependent on the testimony of Berthe de Courrière. The latter was a personage whose eccentricity might well have crossed the border into psychopathology. She would be committed to a mental asylum once more in 1906, and the French writer Guillaume Appolinaire remembered how she once startled him when they were riding the omnibus by declaring she could control the people around them by her mental faculties.[1104] In short, it is not impossible that the lady was somewhat mad.

The two facts that gave the Van Haecke story its enduring afterlife, both in popular and academic literature, were the tenacity with which Huysmans did stick to it, and the reaction or non-reaction upon his allegation by the Belgian Roman- Catholic Church.[1105] Huysmans, it is often recounted, stood by his accusations against Van Haecke until the end of his life, even after he had become an ardent Catholic who played an important role in the Catholic Renouveau of the decennia directly before the First World War. This circumstance and the almost saintly stature the converted writer enjoyed in some Catholic circles have convinced a number of (mostly Catholic) authors that his allegations must have had some truth. While one may wonder whether Catholics are less prone to lying than non- Catholics, or vice versa, the dilemma does not really present itself, for Huysmans was obviously completely convinced of De Courrière's truthfulness. He did not seem to possess any other evidence – even Firmin Vanden Bosch admitted that Huysmans did not present any facts based on first-hand knowledge in his legendary lost memorandum.[1106] This makes it all the more understandable why the ecclesiastical authorities did not take any action against Van Haecke. It is highly improbable that a chaplain of a prominent pilgrimage shrine could regularly organise orgies with hypnotized women and aphrodisiacal nut *confiture* without drawing public attention to himself. If anything, it is more likely that something of a sexual nature occurred between Van Haecke and De Courrière – with or without the priest's active participation – and that de Courrière later added some spice to the story by making Van Haecke a lurking Satanist.

To the catalogue of source material utilized by Huysmans, some historians also add Jules Bois, the writer on occultism and Satanism we encountered – sword in hand – at the

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Lambert, f. 109-117; ibidem, (around) 30 July 1890, Bnf, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 111-114 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 6, f. 193-207.

[1103] Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Arij Prins*, 192; see also Huysmans' letters to Jules Destrée from May-June 1890 and Spetmeber 1890 – Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Jules Destrée*, 163, 166-167.

[1104] Bossier, *Un personnage de roman*, 48; Jean Vinchon, 'Guillaume Apollinaire et Berthe Courrière, inspiratrice de 'Là-Bas',' *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques* 8 (1963): 162-165. By contrast, Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 138, maintains that 'le chanoine belge a laissé derrière lui toute une série d'indices plutôt surlfureux, qu'il paraît impossible de croire inventés par l'imagination de Berthe Courrière […]'. I think Introvigne underestimates the human imagination here, and it is not clear to me which facts provided the 'series of inidications' mentioned by him, or it must be the possibility that Van Heacke dined a few times with ' Catholic Magus' Péladan.

[1105] Thus Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 153, who refers to the suspect reaction of the Belgian Church, and the Belgian judge Paul Wouters in Bossier, *Geschiedenis van een romanfiguur* (1965), 152, who invokes Huysmans' Catholicity. See also the curious statements in Massignon, 'Huysmans devant la 'confession' de Boullan'. As 'Van Harche', the Belgian chaplain even made it to the pages of volume 4 of the *Bilderlexikon der Erotik*: see *Ergänzungsband zum Bilder-Lexikon: Kulturgeschichte – Literatur und Kunst – Sexualwissenschaft* (Wien: Verlag für Kulturforschung, 1931), 270-271. (I owe this reference to Bossier, *Un personnage de roman*, 19-20).

[1106] Bossier, *Un personnage de roman*, 73-74.

beginning of this chapter. Bois was working on a book about Satanism and magic at the time Huysmans wrote *Là-Bas*, and the two authors exchanged views on the subject intensively. Their cooperation was of such a nature that Huysmans would furnish the preface for Bois' book when it was finally finished in 1895. In 1894, Bois had already published *Les petites religions de Paris* ('Little Religions of Paris'), which features two chapters devoted to Satanism and Luciferianism as well. These books are remarkable by the ambivalence they display towards their subject. In fact, Bois had set out on his literary career with play called *Les Noces de Sathan* ('The Wedding of Sathan,' 1890), in which he had managed to push almost every theme and personage of Romantic Satanism into just 14 pages of effective text – without excluding a suitable whiff of Baudelaire for good measure.[1107] With Bois as well, the influence of *La Sorcière* was tangible, particularly in the connection he made between Satanism and women's liberation, a cause that enjoyed his warm support.[1108] With regard to contemporary Satanism, however, he did not uncover a single new fact. Although Massimo Introvigne, for instance, presents Bois as doing journalistic research on Satanism in the vaults of the Parisian religious underground, uncovering information that eventually found its way into *Là-Bas*, the truth of the matter was, in fact, exactly the other way round.[1109] As Bois graciously admitted in a footnote in one of his books, it had been Huysmans who had provided him with the information he needed, in general, by forwarding him relevant letters he received from Boullan.[1110] Thus the description of Eugène Vintras' battle with Amun-Ra found its way into Bois' treatise, while he also quoted copiously from *Là-Bas* itself.[1111] While

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[1107] In this strange little work, a fierce 'Sathan'marries 'Psyché', who makes him understand that love is the most powerful force in the world. In a subsequent monologue, Satan presents himself as 'the Jesus of another age', 'more of a redemptor than the other'; the 'ineffable voice' of the deity than announces that he opens his heart to Satan and blesses the couple with the words 'Be united in your strivings for the beyond.' See Bois, Jules, *Les noces de Sathan* (Paris: Albert Savine, 1890), 12, 14.

[1108] For Michelet, see Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, 36, 153-179; Bois criticized Michelet while continuing to use him in *Monde Invisible*, 200-201, 206. A proper scholarly biography of Jules Bois is still lacking, but a good introduction can be found in Dominique Dubois, *Jules Bois (1868-1943): le reporter de l'occultisme, le poète et le féministe de la belle époque* (s.l.: Arqa, 2006). P. 53 and 69-71 of this book tell about Bois' ventures in occultism; pp. 175-186 are devoted to his feminism. Like Huysmans, Bois would convert to Roman- Catholicism at a later date, and move increasingly towards a position of franco- Catholic nationalism. In 1916, he was sent to America, officially by his newspaper, but in reality probably by his friend, the French Minister Poincaré; he would remain in the USA for the rest of his life (Cf. Dubois, *Jules Bois*, 26, 204, 252).

[1109] Massimo Introvigne devotes a section to Bois under the title 'Jules Bois enquête' in *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 116-126. The Italian expert on fringe esotericism also refers to documents that Huysmans would be able to dispose of in his capacity as civil servant in the French Ministry of the Interior (cf. p. 133-134). There is no indication at all, however, that Huysmans could have found anything on Satanist organisations in the ministerial archives; only one minor story in *Là-Bas* has been conclusively proven to be based on police reports consulted by him.

[1110] Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, 197n: 'À lui [Huysmans] d'ailleurs je dois la documentation de l'office ténébreux et de l'office qui le combat, sans compter son exemple qui guida mon style.' Bois accompanied Huysmans to the Boullanist Carmel at leats once and also corresponded directly with Boullan, who urged him to write a novel on the position of women under the Reign of the Paraclet (Letters by Boullan to Bois, 3 July 1892 and 6 Septmeber 1892, BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 10-12 and f. 30). Bois would indeed publish a book on the 'Female Question' in 1896, under the title *L'Eve Nouvelle*; the possible influence of Boullan on this work remains to be investigated.

[1111] As noted before, many letters from Boulan to Huysmans ended up in the estate of Bois. The scene with Amun-Ra (Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, 201-206) was derived by Bois from one of them, a document entitled 'Example du Succubat, et de la Messe pour Satan' sent by Boullan to Huysmans around 25 February 1890, BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 67-69 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 63-67. I have not encountered the Vintrasian original for this story in the Collection Lambert. Another description of a Black Mass in Bois (*Le Satanisme et la Magie*, 199-201) originates with a letter from Boullan to Huysmans sent around 18 February 1890, BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 55, which in turn was copied by Boullan from a vision noted down by Vintras on 4 February 1842, 'Visions de Vintras. 1851-1865,' BnF, Fonds Lambert, 125, p. 68-71. *Là-Bas* is quoted on pp. 281-286 of *Le Satanisme et la Magie*.

Bois did interview some people for the other 'petites religions' he described (and did not refrain from adding a prayer to Isis written by himself), his pages on Satanism and Luciferianism are based completely on secondary sources.

By now, I think we may allow ourselves to conclude that the Satanists from *Là-Bas*, however complicated their genesis may have been, were an exclusively literary creation. Huysmans never succeeded in finding the Satan-worshipping cult he was looking for. There is no evidence that he ever witnessed a Satanist ceremony himself and indeed every indication is to the contrary. The sources we know he *did* use, do not inspire a great amount of confidence: two neo-Catholic gurus recounting their visions, as well as an eccentric lady who might have been slightly confused. Huysmans' description 'after nature' of Satanism was fiction, not fact.

Huysmans himself, it must be noted, clearly believed in this fiction. Of course he must have been aware of the way his own novel was constructed. Yet for him, *Là-Bas* presented a real, or at least *realistic,* picture of practices that he believed were going on secretly. He trusted his sources, and most importantly, he believed that the people he described were 'true to type', in the same way as a prostitute or a factory worker in a naturalist novel had to be 'true to type' – without necessarily entailing a factual accurate biographical description of an individual prostitute or an individual factory worker.[1112] Thus he was able to present his book as a 'documented' portrait of contemporary Satanism. 'Documented' did not mean that he had made a critical comparison of available sources, as a professional historian might be expected to do. It meant simply what it said: that he had utilized *documents*, written or oral texts from real life rather than the world of literature. In this respect, it is clarifying to read the musings Huysmans put into the mouth of Durtal in *Là-Bas* with regard to the French historian Michelet, that 'doddering old maid' who was nevertheless 'the most intimate and the most artistic' of all historians. 'Historical events,' Durtal meditates, 'Are to a man of talent simply a springboard for his ideas and his style, seeing that all facts are played up or played down according to the demands of a particular case, or according to the disposition of the writer who handles them. As for the documents propping them up, it's worse still, because none of them are irrefutable, and all are subject to revision.'[1113] This is certainly a conclusion that could be applied to Huysmans' own book as well.

competing concepts of Satanism

Having answered the question whether Huysmans' Satanists were real (with a definite no), we may now turn to the ideas that prompted Huysmans to use the concept of Satanism as his 'springboard'. What attracted him (as well as his readers) to the concept of Satanism? Why this obsession with worshipping the devil? As we saw before, Huysmans had already crossed two different conceptions of Satanism while documenting himself for *Là-Bas*. The first of them was proposed by the neo-Lévian occultists. For Guaita, Papus and Péladan, the real followers of Satan were the practitioners of 'Black Magic': those that used the astral force for evil purposes and/or let themselves become inebriated with it. In this, they continued in the tracks of Éliphas Lévi. Satanism was something they implicitly or explicitly attributed to others, mostly to competitors in the sphere of esotericism, with a prominent place reserved to Joseph Boullan, that 'modern avatar of the sorcerer'.

It is not hard to see why the Paris Rosicrucians were so interested in propagating this stereotype of the adversary. Occultism still had a very doubtful reputation among the general populace, and the Rosicrucians were at pains to emphasize the respectability of their pursuits,

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[1112] Huysmans did explicitly compare his novel with his earlier naturalist work in this way in aletter to an iunidentified correspondent cited in Jouvin, 'Les Lettres de J.-K. Huysmans,' 290; 'car *Là-Bas* est naturaliste, en effet, si par c emot vous entendez seulement la véracité du document, la réalité des personnages.'

[1113] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 32-33.

which they conceived as being on a par with regular science and regular religion. What better way to do this than to contrast oneself as good magician with the evil workers of Black Magic? It is important to note, however, that their concept of Satanism was purely 'theological': they did not necessarily maintain that their opponents were *intentionally* worshipping Satan, but rather that their practices *implicitly* amounted to a veneration of the devil – much as the pagan Romans had *really* worshipped demons instead of gods according to the early Christians. Real, militant, 'avowed' Satanism mercifully was 'an evil of exception', according to Stanislas de Guaita.[1114]

Boullan and his followers presented another concept of Satanism, originating in the tradition of Vintrasism. Satanism also implied black magic for Boullan, but its most important element was a deliberate anti-Christian attitude that became particularly manifest in the ritual defilement of the host. In many respects, this was merely a continuation of the old, pre-modern tradition of attribution regarding heretics, witches, and Jews that we described in the first chapter. Although Vintras and Boullan sometimes gave their Satanists futuristic trappings (one may remember the strange metal wires used during the invocation of Amun-Ra), fundamentally they held on to the same basic scheme as the old demonologists.[1115] They applied this attribution to new enemies, however. The Roman- Catholic Church in particular was depicted as a horde of Satanists by the two heresiarchs. Time and again Boullan underlined the status of Rome as a centre of Satanism which surround the Papal Chair and control the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries. 'Pius IX and Leo XIII have both been slaves, and they could not break their chains.'[1116] While the indispensability of ordained priests to magical practice was an idea of some antiquity, the great stress that both Vintras and Boullan placed on Satanism among priests and Roman- Catholic dignitaries clearly increased their agitation against a church that had evicted them. Particularly with Boullan, Satanism increasingly seems to have functioned as a mechanism that could be applied to any opponent – a mechanism to which he took recourse ever more frequently as his small religious group became more and more isolated. The intensely dramatic spiritual fisticuffs he had with the practitioners of Satanism enhanced his prestige among his followers and must have given a sense of cosmic mission to the small schismatic assembly that seemed so insignificant in real life.

Huysmans' own ideas of Satanism were more complex and more ambiguous. As we have seen, he had started out on his quest for Satanism in the hope of finding a real-life relict of the Middle Ages, an era at the same time more splendid and more terrible than the one in which he lived. Apart from common curiosity and professional interest, it was his personal thirst for genuine manifestations of the supernatural and the spiritual, whether 'black' or 'white', which had set him on this trail. In this context, the term Satanism could have a wide variety of meanings for him which were not always identical to the definition applied in the present publication. Often, for instance, he utilized the word to designate demonic possession, even when involuntary.[1117]

[1114] Guaita, *Serpent de la Genèse*, 1:520.

[1115] In a 'Rapport apolostique sur Rome' dated 1 September 1864, Vintras recounts a conversation he had with 'Sathan', in which the latter interestingly enough declares that he now no longer uses war, pest, and catastrophe as his arms, but scientific and technical progress. See 'Visions de Vintras, 1848-1864,' BnF, Fonds Lambert, 126/6, p. 44-45.

[1116] Letter Boullan to Huysmans, 27 Feb. 1890, BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 70-71 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 69-73: 'Pie IX et Léon XIII ont été esclaves, et ils ne peuvent briser la chaine.' Compare letter from 23 July 1890, BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 100-102 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 97, f. 64 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 159.

[1117] Cf. Huysmans' preface to Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, vii.

It is not unlikely that initially, to some degree, Huysmans had been positively inclined towards Satanism. [1118] Like Baudelaire's traveller, he had been prepared to jump into the abyss of heaven *or* hell, as long as he would find something truly new and truly real in its depths. Although there are no unambiguous utterances of him to support this, he may well have been looking for a Satanist group so urgently with the dimly-considered idea of joining one in the back of his mind. Some traces of this initial attitude can possibly be detected on the pages of *Là-Bas*, particularly in Canon Docre's remarkable invocation of Satan during the black Mass. Over the top and brimming with irony as it may be, the speech contains an undeniable element of social criticism, strangely inappropriate in a congregation said to be consisting of high-ranking church officials and wealthy notables. As a contemporary observer remarked, 'many similar speeches might be discovered by anyone who would take the pains to wade through the back numbers of certain Anarchist and ultra-Socialist publications'.[1119] A faint remnant of 'old style' left wing Romantic Satanism surfaces here. Huysmans' anti-democratic tendencies were matched by an equally vehement anti-capitalism at this date, and if anything, his overall political affiliation could still be described as left wing. Relevant excerpts from *Là-Bas* were indeed published in periodicals of anarchist signature, with full compliance of their author.[1120]

There is more than just the political aspect, however. Already in *À Rebours*, Des Esseintes had coupled an almost involuntary attraction to the Christian religion with an equally strong inclination towards darker, blasphemous forms of spirituality. This clearly reflected Huysmans' own state of mind. For a while, he found himself in roughly the same predicament as the early Romantic Satanists: rejecting the overly rationalistic outlook of his precursors and contemporaries, yet unable to 'return' to the unconditional faith of traditional Christianity. In the 1880s, Huysmans had considered occultism as a possible way out of the naturalist lock-down. Early 1890, he dismissed the occultists as incompetent posers, and started to search for Satanism, which he expected to be a more 'real', more powerful, more medieval form of dissident spirituality. There is something in this sequence of events that strongly suggests he was looking for more than just 'documentation'.

After 1890, when his correspondence and contact with Boullan gradually brought him over to an ever more fiercely anti-Satanism, Huysmans' attitude towards Satanism shifted from tentative identification to outspoken attribution. In April 1891 he wrote to his friend, the artist Jean Lorrain: 'Personally, I renounce all Satanism. […] I will take a bath and give myself a rough grooming – I will purge myself and, my body cleansed, I will confess myself – after which, I think, I will be in such a candid state that I will be able to enter in the proper hysteria for a reverse of *Là-Bas*.'[1121] Yet even then, the concept of Satanism remained an essential ingredient of his spiritual worldview. Its existence, and the supernatural facts that produced themselves in the clash between the Satanists and the faithful, were irrefutable proof that naturalism and positivism did not have the last word in describing the universe. The world contained drama and mystery far beyond the banality of everyday life and the run-of-the-mill of nature and its laws. This explains in part why a nineteenth century 'man of the world' and pioneering avant-garde author like Huysmans could be found to adopt convictions that often strike one as completely pre-modern. Huysmans needed Satanism for the *Wiederbezauberung*

[1118] This hypothesis was also forwarded by Remy de Gourmont, who claimed that 'Huysmans, pendant qu'il écrivait *Là-Bas*, n'avait pas été sans faire quelques tentatives pour l'incliner au satanisme.' Gourmont, 'Souvenirs sur Huysmans,' 15.

[1119] Legge, 'Devil-worship and freemasonry,' 469.

[1120] See Jean F. Desjardins, 'Huysmans fut-il anarchiste? À propos des collaborations retrouvées,' *Bulletin de la Société J.-K Huysmans* 37 (1959) 36:366-374.

[1121] Jouvin, 'Les Lettres de J.-K. Huysmans,' 292: 'Personnellement, je renonce à toute le satanisme. […] Je prendrai un bain avec étrilles – je me purgerai et, le corps propre, je me confesserai – après quoi je serai, je pense, en un état candide qui me permettra de m'hystériser dans un à rebours de *Là-Bas*!'

of the world he longed for.[1122] Its existence had become an essential component in his program of re-enchantment: so when he set out to look for it, he was bound to find it.

Notwithstanding the plausibility of this reconstruction, the unexpected volte face by Huysmans keeps presenting us with tantalizing questions. Discerning readers may have noted that the writer's predicament mirrored in many respects that of the early nineteenth-century Romantic Satanists. Huysmans would have shared their dissatisfaction with the reductionist rationalism that confronted them and him, as well as their disgust for the dominating forms of institutional religion. Why then did Huysmans choose to abjure 'the devil and all his pomp' and convert to Roman Catholicism, and, what is more: to a Catholicity that seemed to be more conservative than that of the pope? Without reducing Huysmans' spiritual path to a mere contextual product, we can nevertheless point out certain historical developments that make his decision more understandable. In the first place, it is essential to remember that not all Romantics had supported revolutionary change or expressed sympathy for Satan. Romanticism had always had had its proponents of 'old-time' religiosity and 'traditional Christianity', especially in France. In the early nineteenth century, this position could be interpreted – correctly or incorrectly – as signifying one's compliance with the hegemony of conservatism and the moral majority. In the decades that followed, however, secularising and democratising tendencies had gradually attained an even greater ascendancy, especially in France, and certainly among the cultural elite.[1123] In these circumstances, embracing traditional forms of Christianity could become a *countercultural* statement. As one of the protagonists of *Là-Bas* explained, neatly reversing one of the favourite ideas of Romantic Satanism: 'At the present time, it is very clear that the good Lord has gotten the losing part and that the Evil one rules the world as its master. Well […], as for me, I am for the Vanquished! That seems a generous idea to me, and a proper kind of opinion.'[1124]

We can, in retrospective, fairly precisely point out where the balance had begun to tilt: somewhere in the 1850s, under the Second Napoleonic empire, when Baudelaire, who had lost nothing of his keen instincts for dandyism, began to move towards a more and more conservative Roman Catholicism. This does not imply that extreme versions of political and religious rebellion like anarchism and Satanism had become stripped of their shock value. It simply meant that a new, paradoxical option had presented itself to the cultural avant-garde as a way to express its countercultural dissent: that of *radical reactionaryism*. Baudelaire may have anticipated this attitude when he called the archconservative doctrine of throne and altar a 'revolutionary maxim' in his personal notes.[1125]

In this and other respects, Huysmans merely followed in the tracks that the French poet had set out some three decades before. The importance of this countercultural element in Huysmans can be clearly discerned from his reaction to the occultism of his day. This he dismissed in a surprisingly off-hand manner, not because he had found fault with its doctrines, but because he considered it too much a product of his own times, as something *modern*. The French writer was looking for something that really went against the grain of his own culture. This attitude may help to explain the comparative ease with which Huysmans changed from a

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[1122] In a letter to Vanden Bosch, Huysmans declared that it had been through 'the vision of the supernatural of evil that I have begun to have a perception of the supernatural of good'; Firmin van den Bosch, *Impressions de littérature contemporaine* (Bruxelles: Vromant, 1905), 16.

[1123] Cholvy, *La religion en France*, 72-77.

[1124] Huysmans, *Là-Bas* (Plon, s.a.), 85: A l'heure actuelle, il est bien évident que le Dieu bon a le dessous, que le Mauvais règne sur ce monde, en maître. Or […], je suis pour le Vaincu, moi! c'est une idée généreuse, je crois, et une opinion propre!' For the emergence of Roman- Catholicism as a counter-cultural movement in the fin de siècle, and Huysmans role in this, see Ewoud Matthijs Kieft, Tot oorlog bekeerd: Religieuze Radicalisering in West-Europa 1870-1914 (Groningen: [unpublished dissertation], 2011).

[1125] Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes*, 9 [Fusées, II]: 'Le trône et l'autel, maxime révolutionnaire.'

vanguard exponent of modernity into a reactionary Roman Catholic gladly immersing himself into a world of pre-modern beliefs, (neo) medieval monasticism, and physical asceticism.
Huysmans' gullibility for the pre-modern, meanwhile, was not without its limits, at least in the period that he was writing *Là-Bas*. He did not incorporate every bit of information provided by Boullan directly into his novel. Some of the points on which he decided to deviate from Boullan concern minor issues – he disinclined to mention Holland as a centre of the Ré-Théurgists, for instance, perhaps out of respect for his Dutch roots; and he probably thought it imprudent to repeat Boullan's assertion that the Rosicrucians had sent him a venereal disease by astral waves (which the old thaumaturg boasted to have cured himself, however).[1126] Yet one crucial difference between Huysmans' and Boullan's description of Satanism that certainly deserves to be mentioned concerns the appearance of the devil during Satanist ceremonies. Boullan, in his letters, again and again emphasized the actual presence of Satan during the black Mass.[1127] This was also the reason for all the 'diabolical' incense that Huysmans would describe with loving detail. 'The purpose of that dense Cloud of perfumes,' Boullan had stipulated, 'is to furnish the Princes of Satan the means to materialize themselves […] in the natural order. The black Mass does not start unless Satan, or his Princes, Beelzebuth, Astaroth, Asmodeaus, Belial, Moloch, Baal-Shegor, and others, have made themselves visible.'[1128]
Apparently Huysmans did not found it credible or feasible to include a real-life appearance of the devil into the Satanism scenes featured in his novel. Although he did not hesitate to suggest the involvement of supernatural actors, Huysmans proceeded along the lines that had already become visible during the Affair of the Poisons: his Satanism is essentially a *human* affair, an activity *about* Satan, and not *by* Satan. This may have been a key to the success of *Là-Bas*. Despite its recuperation of pre-modern religious elements, Huysmans' Satanism remained eminently suited for a public that had lost the 'faith of the Primitive'. The presence of the otherworld was tantalizingly suggested, but limited itself to phenomena on the border of the psychological and the physical that were open to different interpretations. If this adequately reflects the attitude of Huysmans himself, he had remained more a child of his time than he would have liked.

An analysis of the motives that attracted Huysmans to Satanism would be widely off the mark if another element is not given its full dues: namely that of sexuality. For Huysmans, Satanism clearly implied a lot of sex. In *Là-Bas*, the anecdotes concerning historical Satanism can almost always be grouped around this theme; Canon Docre's speech is mainly a paean of sexual license; and the host at the black Mass is consecrated by him by ejaculating upon it. The way the women afterwards 'bury' the hallowed bread underneath their bodies also suggests sexual abuse.

[1126] See Boullan's letter from 16 July 1890 to Huysmans, BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 97-98 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 129-137.
[1127] With his letter of 18 July 1890, for instance, Boullan wrote especially in the margin that Satan appeared visibly at the Black Mass; BnF, Mss. Occ. N.a. fr. 16596, f. 92-95 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 97, f. 51-52 = BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 139-141. He repeated this explicit assurance in his letter from 23 July 1890 (ibidem, f. 100-102/f. 60-65/ f. 153-161). In this, he was at one accord with Vintras, who had described Satan appearing as a goat during a Black Mass (BnF, Fonds Lambert, 125, p. 68-71, recuperated in a letter by Boullan to Huysmans d.d. 18 February 1890, BnF, Fonds Lambert, 76, f. 55).
[1128] Boullan, 'Document sur la Messe Noire, de nos Jours', f. 119: 'Le But de cette épaisse Nué de parfums est de fournir aux Princes de Satan le moyen de se matérialiser […] dans l'ordre naturel. La Messe noire ne commence pas, sauf que Satan, ou ses Princes, Beelzébuth, Astaroth, Asmodé, Bélial, Moloch, Baal-Shegòr et autres, se soient rendu visibles.' Boulland continued on the verso of the page: 'Alors Satan, ou ses Princes, qui sont là visible, répandent cette odeur du sabbat, qui excite le passion jusqu'à la fureur…'

Here we may come to the core of both Huysmans' attraction to and his revulsion of Satanism as he saw it. Huysmans had a troubled relationship with the other sex and his own sexuality. In his works, he generally described the sexual act as degrading and ultimately unsatisfying. Sexuality meant surrender, a capitulation to woman who wielded the instincts of the male as her tool; and woman remained, after all was said and done, the more primitive and pettier part of mankind. In these sentiments as well, Huysmans was a child of his time. Decadents, Naturalists, and Symbolists devoted many pages to eroticism, preferably in its more deviant forms. Yet they seldom described the sexual encounter as a joyful or even gratifying experience. This was the era in which the *femme fatale* enjoyed its greatest flourishing in poetry and fiction; the woman who entices and dominates man by his own sexuality.[1129] We can see a reflection of these fin-de-siècle attitudes even in the works of the Parisian occultists we discussed, with their repeated emphasis of the magician's control of his own and other's sexuality – turning the tables, as it were, on Feminity and its spell of attraction. At the same time, they wrote at length on the debaucheries of witches, 'black magicians', and spiritualists. The 'flowers of evil' clearly retained their fascination – it was no coincidence that Baudelaire was celebrated as their forerunner by the fin de siècle Decadents.

For Huysmans, this alteration between attraction and repulsion was a lived experience. A frequent visitor of the brothel, he felt unable and disinclined to live up to the rigorous moral standards of Christianity. His struggle to come to terms with the sexual force forms the implicit and often explicit subtext of his wavering between Satanism and Roman Catholicism at this time. He translated his inner conflict to the spiritual plane by juxtaposing Christianity and Satanism. Already before 1886, in a review of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, Huysmans identified Venus with Satan, and both Venus and Satan with a name that only was to be whispered: 'Sodomitica Libido'.[1130] While Christianity was the religion of chastity, of 'purity', and of sexual abstinence, Satanism was the 'spirituality of lasciviousness', giving free reign to the subconscious and the instinctive: a spiritual alternative that did not demand 'useless proofs of chaste loins'. 'As it's very difficult to be a Saint, […] it only remained to become a Satanist', Huysmans wrote about Gilles de Rais in *Là-Bas*, and it is more than probable that he was talking about a part of himself here.[1131]

At the very same time, however, the sexual emphasis Huysmans placed on Satanism devaluated it in his eyes to something ultimately banal. It is worthwhile to note the significant resemblances between Huysmans and Baudelaire once more here, but this time specifically with respect to their treatment of the 'Satanic'. Baudelaire had already associated the diabolical with the feminine, the sexual, and the material, which all occluded the human perception and reception of the transcendent. Huysmans shared these attributions.[1132] His repugnance of the sexual was partly brought about by a Baudelarian contempt for the 'natural' which had only been intensified by his weariness with literary naturalism, scientific materialism, and the vulgar this-worldliness that he thought he saw around him. From the

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[1129] Cf. Ellis Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 23; Praz, *Romantic Agony*, 187-286.

[1130] J.K. Huysmans, 'L'ouverture de Tannhæuser'; this review was included in the second edition of his *Croquis parisiens*, published 1886. See Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Croquis parisiens* (Paris: Éditions Slatkine, 1996), 186-191, and especially 188-189. Incientally, Huysmans had been preceded in his admiration for Wagner by Baudelaire, who had published a pamphlet defending the composer in 1861; see 'Richard Wagner et *Tannhäuser* à Paris,' in Baudelaire, *Curiosités esthétiques*, 689-728.

[1131] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 63.

[1132] This is exemplified in the attitude to women Huysmans' works from this periods express. In his article about Rops and erotic art, he had already declared that 'la femme acquiert, elle aussi, son Dieu, un Satan […].' (*Certains*, 106). In a letter to Prins from 25 April 1891, he called woman 'le plus puissant outil de douleurs qui nous sont donné' (*Lettres inédites à Arij Prins*, 255), a description he found apt enough to repeat in *En Route*, 80.

viewpoint of this tradition, it was certainly no compliment when he made Satanism into a *sexual* religion in Là-Bas. While Christianity lifted the bodily into the spiritual – in the eucharist for instance, or in its sanctification of bodily suffering – Satanism degraded the spiritual into the animal – most conspicuously by turning the host into an object of sexual abuse. *Là-Bas* was, before anything, an imprecation of a time and a people only living to indulge into their urges 'down there', below the belt: the women who were only interested in being bedded while pretending not to; the 'realist' writers who always wrote the same stories about adultery; the common people who just wanted 'to stuff their guts and excrete their souls through their backsides', as the famous last lines of the novel proclaim. In this respect, Satanism was perfectly in vogue with its time. And with that, it was also dismissed.

The association between Satanism and deviant sexuality dated back to at least the Middle Ages, as we have noted in the previous chapters. *Là-Bas*, however, did much to give this notion a new poignancy and a modern restatement. It also gave a basic ambivalence to Huysmans' picture of Satanism, an ambivalence reflecting his own inner duality. On the one hand, Satanism was a religion of 'gothic' mystery and intense perversion; on the other hand, it was surrounded by a certain sordidness that made it almost commonplace, a mere celebration of the 'baser' instincts of man. This ambivalence also helps to understand what happens in the apotheosis of Durtal's visit to the black Mass, when Madame Chantelouve seduces him in a shabby room above a pub. This scene, sometimes felt to be an anticlimax, and dismissed by one author as badly written soft-pornography, in fact marks the final descent of Durtal into the 'down there' of Satanic sexuality. It is also the moment that Durtal himself commits Missa Negra-style sacrilege. The crumbs of the host he discovers on the bed after having sex with Madame Chantelouve are clearly implied to have arrived there in a blatantly blasphemous way. The implication is made explicit in *En Route*, the sequel to *Là-Bas*, where Durtal confesses his attendance of the black Mass and his subsequent defilement of a host that Chantelouve had hidden 'en elle' – 'inside of her'.[1133] The episode forms a shocking counterpart to the description earlier in *Là-Bas* (cited from Joseph Görres and ultimately deriving from Madeleine Bavent) of the sacrilegious priests who placed the host around their member before proceeding to abuse their female victims. 'Divine Sodomy, in other words?', Durtal jokingly remarks after this anecdote. Even to non-Catholic ears, this joke has a definite ring of impropriety.[1134]

Few commentators elaborate on what exactly happens in this crucial scene with Mrs. Chantelouve. Only Ellis Hanson frankly tells us that she hid the host in her vagina.[1135] It may be wondered, however, if he really hit the right spot here. We have already noticed Huysmans' association of Satan with 'Sodomitica Libida'; and in the prolegomenon to their final act, one can read that Chantelouve showed Durtal 'the practices of convicts, depravities that he not even had suspected to exist, giving them extra spice by ghoulish frenzies'.[1136]

[1133] J.-K. Huysmans, *En Route* (Paris: Plon, 1955), 236: 'Il raconta, en balbutiant, qu'il avait assisté, par curiosité, à une messe noire et qu'après, sans le vouloir, il avait souillé une hostie que cette femme, saturée de satanisme, cachait en elle.' Frick, *Die Satanisten*, 2:213, made the remark about the motel room scene: 'Jeder Pornoschrifsteller von heute würde diese 'Soft-Liebesszene' besser zu Papier brengen.'

[1134] Huysmans, *Là-Bas*, 78. Johann Joseph (von) Görres (1776-1848) was a German Roman- Catholic author. In volume three and four of his extensive work *Die Christliche Mystik* (1842), he had devoted many pages to 'dämonischen Mystik'.

[1135] Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism*, 147.

[1136] Huysmans, *Là-Bas* (Plon, s.a.), 382: 'Elle le saisit et elle lui révéla des mœurs de captif, des turpitudes dont il ne la soupçonnait même pas; elle les pimenta de furies de goule […].' Brendan King's translation of 'mœurs de captif' with 'slavish habits' seems quaintly inappropriate to me, especially given the context.

The sexual practice suggested here was certainly not far from Huysmans' bed; his letters to Prins dwell extensively on the pleasures of anilingus and his quest among the prostitutes of Paris for a 'lilac and rose little hole' suitable for this pastime (Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Arij Prins*, 93, 140, 141, 149, 203-204, 231). His

Mere vaginal abuse, one feels, would be rather tame for a writer like J.-K. Huysmans. Huysmans had certainly read De Sade, and it may well be that the terrible tribulation inflicted upon poor Juliette by the impious monks makes yet another camouflaged appearance here.

aftermath

Sex and Satanism proved to be a powerful selling combination in fin-de-siècle Paris. *Là-Bas* was a huge commercial success, especially after the national railroads forbade its sale at station bookstalls because of the novel's immoral content.[1137] In his letters to Prins, Huysmans rejoiced about the continuing sales of his book, remarking with unmistakable delight that he had brought into light, and even into vogue, the Satanism that had been abolished since the Middle Ages. 'There are lots of people asking me to take them to a black Mass,' he added.[1138] In truth we can say that Huysmans, for once, was not boasting vainly here. *Là-Bas* was very well the work that introduced the idea of a living, flourishing Satanism to the general public of the late nineteenth century. Fashionable Parisians travelled to Bruges to see Mass said by Van Haecke, the unholy priest with the crucified tattooed on his foot soles, or made excursions to a disused chapel that rumour had was the location of the book's black Mass.[1139] Writers and journalists all over France and Europe copied Huysmans' format and 'discovered' Satanism – usually with a comparable carelessness about fact and fiction.[1140] The respected English occultist Arthur Waite, observing from the other side of the Channel, saw things clearly when he claimed Huysmans as the originator of the Satanism obsession of his days. 'A distinguished man of letters, M. Huysman [sic], who has passed out of Zolaism in the direction of transcendental religion, is, in a certain sense, the discoverer of modern Satanism,' he wrote, 'Under the thinnest disguise of fiction, he gives in his romance of La Bas [sic], an incredible and untranslatable picture of sorcery, sacrilege, black magic, and nameless abominations, secretly practiced in Paris. Possessing a brilliant reputation, commanding a wide audience, and with a psychological interest attaching to his own personality, he has given currency to the Question of Lucifer, has promoted it from obscurity into prominence, and has made it the vogue of the moment.'[1141] We can safely say that the 'flourishing' of

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biographer Baldick thinks it probable that Huysmans had had homosexual experiences as well (Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 82). During the preparation of *Là-Bas*, Huysmans also explored the underground subculture of homosexuality, and while he does not seem to have found personal gratification here, he used elements of his explorations for the construction of Satanism in *Là-Bas* (cf. Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Arij Prins*, 180, 184). On Huysmans and 'sodomy', see Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism*, 138-152.

[1137] Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 166.

[1138] Huysmans to Prins 23 May 1891 and [24 January] 1892; Huysmans, *Lettres inédites à Arij Prins*, 222, 235. For many years to come, Huysmans would continue to receive letters from occultists consulting him as an expert: the Lambert Collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, for instance, contains such letter from the Dutch editor A. J. Riko (letter of 11 October 1895, BnF, Fonds Lambert, 31/44) and from Fabre des Essarts (letter of 7 February 1902, ibidem, 31/2).

[1139] Legge, 'Devil-worship and freemasonry,' 470; Buet, *Grands Hommes en Robe de Chambre*, 234.

[1140] Among the many writers inspired by *Lá-bas*, we may mention the Dutch author First Lapidoth, whose *Goëtia* appeared with S.C. van Doesburg in Leiden in 1893 (2 vols.), and in a German translation as *Goëtia: Die Priesterin der schwarzen Kunst* (Dresden: Heinrich Minden, s.a. [1897]). It sought to combine some measure of left-wing sympathy for Satan ('the Prince… not of Darkness, but of Individual Liberty', 1:42) with the Decadentism and sordid eroticism of Huysmans' works. Some laconic information about this book can be found in Jacqueline Bel, 'Satan in Holland: Over *Goëtia*, de salon-sataniste van Frits Lapidoth,' in *Teruggedaan: Eenenvijftig bijdragen voor Harry G.M. Prick ter gelegenheid van zijn afscheid als conservator van het Nederlands Letterkundig Museum en Documentatiecentrum* , ed. Th. A. P. Bijvoet, S. A. J. van Faassen, and Anton Korteweg ('s-Gravenhage: Nederlands Letterkundig Museum & Documentatiecentrum, 1988), 27-35. More prominent examples will follow in the next chapters; in addition, a long list of authors basing themselves on Huysmans can be found in Thiele, *Satanismus als Zeitkritik bei Joris-Karl Huysmans*, 103n.

[1141] Arthur Edward Waite, *Devil-Worship in France, or the Question of Lucifer: A Record of Things Seen and Heard in the Secret Societies according to the Evidence of Initiates* (London: George Redway, 1896), 11-12. On waite, see then entry by Robert A. Gilbert in the *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 2:1164-1165.

Satanism that some historians tend to discern at the end of the nineteenth century, was to a great degree the work of J.-K. Huysmans: and also – without wishing to anticipate the next chapter and our final conclusions – that this 'flourishing' was primarily one of *talking about* Satanism, instead of the thing itself.

Not everybody was pleased with *Là-Bas*. Papus, Guaita and Pèladan were understandably not amused with the way they were represented in Huysmans' novel. Papus suggested in his journal *L'Initation* that Huysmans got his list of old demonologies from Larousse and that his ideas about bewitchment, succubus and the Black Mass were hopelessly out of date; or, in other words, not in accord with the latest insights of the Lévi school. Huysmans, Papus concluded, had been 'the victim of a mystification' deployed by a certain ex-abbé in Lyons. Papus also argued that a real black Mass would need an 'effusion of blood' and the inversion of holy symbols like the cross or the pentagram. Neither of those could be found in Huysmans' description of the black Mass, but both elements were present in the 'Masses of Blood' that had been practiced in this century by 'a deranged person': Eugène Vintras. Again, it was Vintras' 'successor' Boullan who was implicated.[1142]

Péladan adopted a similar line of defence, also pointing out the maleficent influence of Boullan, whose misdeeds, the Sâr claimed, had already been well-known to Péladan père. Furthermore he stipulated that Huysmans should have gone straight to the police if he had really witnessed a black Mass, as such a ceremony always included the sacrifice of a new-born child – since Huysmans obviously had not done this, it might be concluded that he was either a liar or an accomplice to murder. In addition, Péladan took revenge in fiction by including a 'Dr. Johannès' in one of his later novels, a 'music teacher' who lives in Lyons and stages improper ceremonies 'without positive blasphemy' in his apartments, involving ritual flagellation as well as a 'phallomime' performed by a young woman to the 'banal tones' of a harmonium.[1143]

Là-Bas may also have prompted Stanislas de Guaita to make haste with the exposure of Boullan he had been planning for years. In 1891, he published the first part of his magnum opus *Le Serpent de la Genèse*. A considerable part of this volume was taken up by a long chapter on 'modern avatars of the sorcerer': and most of this chapter was devoted to Vintras and Boullan, indicated here with the name 'Dr. Baptiste'. In it, Guaita presented the material he and Wirth had collected on the sexual activities of the prophet, with the most salacious parts rendered in prude Latin. Apart from 'celestifying himself every night in the embraces of angels of light like Sahäel, Anandhäel, and others', Boullan also regularly practiced Black Magic, Guaita claimed. The Rosicrucian even maintained (although he had only the word of one of Boullan's ex-followers for it) that Dr. Baptiste was in the habit of feeding the hallowed host to white mice he kept for use in his magical experiments – just as *Là-Bas* said of Canon Docre.[1144]

Guaita's allegations, and the similar statements of Papus and Péladan, have been at the root of the idea uttered by a number of historians that it was Joseph Boullan who was the real Satanist

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[1142] *Papus*, 'La-Bas. Par J.-K. Huysmans,' *L'Initation: Revue philosophique indépendante des Hautes Études* 11 (May 1891): 97-114, here esp. 106-107, 109, and 112. Papus repeated this allegations in *Peut-on Envoûter? Étude historique et critique sur les plus récents travaux concernant l'envoûtement* (Paris: Chamuel, 1893), 18; on p. ii of this book, he also reproduced a 'bewitchment pact from the 19th century' under the heading 'Reproduction photographique d'un document arraché à un sorcier contemporain, l'ex-abbé Boullan'. The (rather unclear) photograph seems to show some kind of esoteric diagram, however, rather than a demonic pact.

[1143] Péladan, *Comment on devient Mage*, 226-227; Péladan, *«Pereat!» (La décadence latine: Éthopée XV)* (1902; reprint, Genève: Editions Slatkine, 1979), 229-236.

[1144] Guaita, *Serpent de la Genèse*, 1:440-416; quote from 1:516; references to Black Magic on 1:497n and 1:498. On page 1:491, Guaita revealed some disgraceful details that had been confided by 'Madame T.' (in which we may easily recognize Julie Thibault) concerning her sexual contacts with subhuman spiritual entities – resulting in a lifelike pregnancy that ended in an enormous outburst of flatulence.

in the whole story, attributing his own practices to Docre/Van Haecke and the Rosicrucians.[1145] This scheme, although temptingly simple, is highly implausible. The fact that he frequently indulged in religious rites of a sexual nature does not make Boullan a Satanist, and everything suggests that he saw his own practices (including the more unusual ones) as of the loftiest nature, and certainly not on a par with the evil doings of the Satanists against whom he was waging battle almost daily in the astral sphere. The infamous 'child sacrifice' mentioned in Boullan's Cahier rose is sometimes referred to in this context as well.[1146] But here again, there is not the slightest indication that elements of Satanism were involved, however insalubrious the priest's activities may have been.

In *Le Serpent de la genèse*, Guaita dealt with Huysmans in a long footnote, repeating Papus' opinion that the writer had been misled by a third party, the 'horrible joker' he had depicted under the name of 'Dr. Baptiste'. Huysmans, Guaita knew 'from an extremely certain source', had lightly put his trust in this impostor and the documents he provided, copying the abbé's notes without even bothering to verify them. Guaita did not doubt, however, that Huysmans would admit his error as soon as he set eyes on the revelations in *Le Serpent de genèse*.[1147]
Nothing could be farther from the truth. In fact, Huysmans only seemed to get more involved with Boullan and his group after *Là-Bas* appeared. His latent sympathy for Satanism was by now a thing of the past, and the polite scepticism with which he had initially approached the eccentric mysticism and dramatic thaumaturgy of the new Johannès was gradually crumbling away as well. Already during the preparation of *Là-Bas*, Boullan had warned him that his novel would attract 'a host of evil spirits' and had sent the Decadent writer a variety of objects to ward off supernatural misfortune, such as a talisman containing one of Vintras' original blood-stained hosts, and a 'tephilim'; a blue cord containing a parchment covered with benedictions that the writer had to pin to his cushion at night.[1148] Huysmans apparently utilized these items, and as time passed by, his customary wink of irony could no longer hide the seriousness of his involvement in this spiritual warfare. In late 1890, he startled a visiting journalist by demonstrating him the use of an exorcist paste made of 'myrrh, incense, camphor, and dried cloves, the plant of Saint John the Baptist'.[1149]
When the tremendous impact of *Là-Bas* began to be felt, Boullan wrote Huysmans a long letter to congratulate him with the success of his novel, for which the whole Lyons Carmel had been ardently praying. He warned him, however, that now the attacks of his enemies would also intensify.[1150] Indeed extraordinary occurrences started to happen the next months, and Huysmans began to experience strange afflictions in the still of the night: a strange

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[1145] This hypothesis has been particularly defended by Joanny Bricaud; see his *J.K. Huysmans et le satanisme*, 76; *Huysmans, Occultiste et Magicien*, 21; *L'abbé Boullan (Docteur Johannès de Là-Bas): Sa vie, sa doctrine et ses pratiques magiques* (Paris: Chacornac Frères, 1927), 90. His conclusion was adopted by Bossier, *Un personnage de roman*, 98-99; Ach, *Joris-Karl Huysmans und die okkulte Dekadenz*, 136 ('ein praktizierende Anhänger diabolischen Riten'); Introvigne (with more reservations), *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 116. Much later, Huysmans also would (once again) class Boullan and his group as 'satanist' (cf. Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 190) – but then again, Huysmans was not exactly sparing with this epithet.
[1146] For example Ach, *Joris-Karl Huysmans und die okkulte Dekadenz*, 137: 'Bei einer Schwarzen Messe am 8. dezember 1860 habe Boullan auf dem Altar ein Kind geopfert, welche ihm Adèle Chevalier im Moment der Konsekration geboren habe.'
[1147] Guaita, *Serpent de la Genèse*, 1:520n.
[1148] Frick, *Die Satanisten*, 2:194; Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 170-171, Belval, *Des ténèbres à la lumière*, 90.
[1149] Huret, *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire*, 165-166; Huysmans sent a letter of rectification with regard to the interview, but only to correct Huret's misquoted description of the compilation of the exorcist mixture: Huysmans to Huret, 6 April 1891; ibidem 353.
[1150] Boullan to Huysmans, 14 June 1891, BnF, Fonds Lambert, 30/5 (4); quoted in Pierre Lambert, 'Une lettre de J.A. Boullan à Huysmans,' *Bulletin de la Société J.-K Huysmans* 25 (1952) 24:203-207.

recurring feeling on his breast, like the fists of an invisible creature thumping him. In the summer of 1891, he took a train to Lyons, were Boullan enacted the ritual we described before to protect him, with the threefold declamation 'Bring down Péladan, bring down Péladan, bring down Péladan!'. Similar precautions were taken against Guaita, whom Madame Thibault subsequently reported cloistered to his bed, stricken with illness as a result of Boullan's powerful counter strike.[1151] (It seems that Péladan did got wind of these proceedings, because in *Comment on devient Mage* he commented upon the ceremony, remarking that as a High Magician, he was invulnerable for this kind of low magic: 'One can only bewitch his inferiors, not the just nor the magician; but a failed incantation returns to the one that has unleashed it; and I fear greatly that Vintras II and Mr. Huysmans have given themselves nothing but a bad headache in my honour; the first in his vain efforts to startle and to make himself believed, the second in obedience to a secret law that he incited, as slanderer of occult pretensions against the novelist that, in 1882, restored into literature the pure Pythagorean ideal of the magician of light in the shape of Merodack.'[1152])

By going to Lyons, Huysmans was not only fleeing the astral encroachments of the occultists, but also his own inner demons. Foremost amongst these was, as ever, the 'spirit of lasciviousness'. To friends and relations, the Decadent writer frequently testified of his desire 'to whiten his soul' at this time. Boullan admonished him as if he was an ascetic monk himself, transmitting Huysmans a special message from Jesus that exhorted him to the purity of loins expected of a 'Knight extirpating Satanism'.[1153] The ex-abbé harboured his own designs with Huysmans, whose newly-found prominence made him an attractive potential propagator of the Boullanist doctrine. After his 'black book', he urged the novelist, his next step should be to write a 'white book', a *Là-Haut* ('Up There') in which Durtal's subsequent conversion would be told and the miraculous powers of good extolled. To entice the former Decadent writer, Boullan promised him 'the spectacle' of persons 'giving themselves over to all kinds of satanic obscenities while experiencing at the same time the illumination of divine life', as well as startling revelations regarding the 'sanctification of the generative act'.[1154]

It is not known if Huysmans ever bothered to react to these offers. Things would not go the way Boullan planned them to, anyway. Huysmans was much impressed by the pilgrimage he and Boullan made to La Salette, but gradually started to drift away to more regular forms of Roman- Catholicism. In 1891, he was introduced to the priest Arthur Mugnier (again by the ubiquitous Berthe de Courrière), who gradually took over Boullan's role as spiritual guardian. In 1892, he visited a Trappist monastery and at last encountered the 'medieval' Catholic faith he had been unable to find earlier. When he finally wrote his 'white book' (*En route*, published 1893), it told about his conversion to Roman Catholicism, and was destined to become one of the landmarks of the *renouveau catholique*, the literary revival within French Catholicism at the end of the nineteenth century. Huysmans would remain in contact with the Boullanists for many years to come, however. In 1895, Julie Thibault herself moved in at

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[1151] Fresnois, *Une étape de la conversion de Huysmans*, 21-22, 27-28. The extra-ordinary occurrences are described in Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 170-171, 190, and in an interview with Jules Bois, 'L'envoûtement et la mort du docteur Boullan,' *Gil Blas* (9 Jan. 1893) 4801:2; Huysmans here complained about 'coups de poing fluidiques': 'mon chat lui-même en est tourmentée'. Compare *Gil Blas* (11 Jan. 1893) 4803:2.

[1152] Péladan, *Comment on devient Mage*, 229.

[1153] Letter from Boullan to Huysmans, 3 March 1891: Belval *Des ténèbres à la lumière*, 111; cf. also the letter of Boullan to Huysmans from 27 august 1892; BnF, fonds Lambert, 30/5 (9), f. 2. Huysmans wrote about his desire to whiten his soul to Jean Lorrain in a letter dated approximately 15 april 1891 (Jouvin, 'Les Lettres de J.-K. Huysmans,' 292); he expressed similar sentiments when he sought contact with the reverend Mugnier. A letter to Berthe de Courrière recounts a vision of the Holy Virgin he had in a brothel, according André du Fresnois 'under an appearance and in postures that the imagination of an honest man would hardly be able to conceive' (Fresnois, *Une étape de la conversion de Huysmans*, 56-57).

[1154] Letters from 7 May 1891 and 28 April 1891, quoted in Thomas, 'Un aventurier de la mystique,' 156, 160; see also 153.

Huysmans' quarters at Rue de Sèvres, number 11, to serve as the writer's housekeeper and spiritual protector. She took her small, home-made altar with her, on which she performed the 'Pro-victimal Sacrifice of Mary' every morning before attending to her chores. Huysmans only sent her away in 1899, when he moved to Ligugé to live near the Benedictine monastery where he was to become an oblate.[1155]

By that time, Boullan himself had long been dead. The old abbé had died in 1893; and with his sudden death, the conflict between Rosicrusians and 'Boullanists' had also been brought to its climax. On 2 January, Boullan had written to Huysmans that the New Year opened with 'ominous presentiments'. On 3 January, he had continued his letter to report 'a terrible incident' that had occurred during the night. 'At three in the morning, I awoke with a feeling of suffocation and called out twice: Madame Thibault, I'm choking! She heard, and came to my room, where she found me lying unconscious. From three till three thirty I was between life and death. At Saint-Maximin, Madame Thibault had dreamt of Guaita, and the next morning a bird of death had called to her – prophesying this attack.' The danger had passed at four, Boullan wrote, but this was too rashly spoken. The next day, Dr. Johannès died.[1156]
Heart failure was the most probable cause of decease; but his followers suspected evil machinations behind his unexpected death. '1893 must be a terrible year if it can begin with the triumph of Black Magic,' Huysmans wrote in his letter of condolence to Madame Thibault.[1157] On the Lyons cemetery, he bought a grave for the Lyons prophet with an inscription that read 'Joseph Boullan (Dr. Johannès), noble victim'.[1158] He also shared his suspicions and Boullan's strangely prophetic letter with Jules Bois. The latter, reacting with 'the spontaneous zeal of recent converts' (as he would later declare), published an article in the Parisian tabloid *Gil Blas* in which he implicitly but unmistakably accused the Rosicrucians of being responsible for Boullan's demise.

> I consider it my duty to relate these facts: the strange presentiments of Joseph Boullan, the prophetic visions of Mme Thibault and M. Misme, and the seemingly indisputable attacks by the Rosicrucians Wirth, Péladan, and Guaita on this man who has died. I am informed that M. le Marquis de Guaita lives a lonely and secluded life; that he handles poisons with great skill and marvellous sureness; that he can volatilize them and direct them into space; that he even has a familiar spirit – M. Paul Adam, M. Dubus, and M. Gary de Lacroze have seen it – locked up in a cupboard at his home, which comes out in visible form at his command… What I now ask, without accusing anyone at all, is that some explanation may be given of the causes of Boullan's death. For the liver and the heart – the organs through which death struck at Boullan – are the very points where the astral forces normally penetrate.[1159]

Bois repeated his allegations two days later, again in *Gil Blas*, while *Figaro* published an interview with Huysmans, in which the writer of *Là-Bas* was quoted as declaring it to be 'indisputable that Guaita and Péladan practice Black Magic everyday': 'Poor Boullan was

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[1155] 'I want no more devilry in my new home!' Huysmans wrote to an old friend on this occasion (Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 277 – the original French is actually 'diabolisme'; see Lambert, 'Un culte hérétique à Paris,' 200). Julie returned to her native village and would be remembered for many years after her death as a woman of great saintliness by the villagers and the local priest because of her strict attendance at Mass, even while she never relinquished her Vintrasian/Boullanist beliefs. The delightful story is recounted in Lambert, 'Un culte hérétique à Paris'.

[1156] Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 208-209; the telegram from Pascal Misme to Huysmans announcing Boullan's death is kept in BnF, Fonds Lambert, 30/5 (21).

[1157] Letter from Huysmans to Julie Thibault, 4 January 1893, BnF, Fonds Lambert, 21/50; English translation from Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 208-209.

[1158] Dufay, 'L'Abbé Boullan et le 'Chanoine Docre',' 520.

[1159] Bois in *Gil Blas* (9 January 1893), 2; translation quoted from Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 209. Jules Bois talks about his spontaneous zeal in *Le monde invisible*, 229.

engaged in perpetual conflict with the evil spirits which for two years they continually sent him from Paris. Nothing is more vague and indefinite than these questions of magic, but it is quite possible that my poor friend Boullan has succumbed to a supremely powerful spell.'[1160]

By now, the Paris Rosicrucians were no longer a house undivided. In 1891, Papus and Guaita had ousted Péladan from their organisation – ostensibly because they deemed that the eccentric behaviour of the Sâr made the discipline of magic look ridiculous, but in reality, Péladan's outspoken Ultramontanism will have been a more significant factor. The Sâr founded his own esoteric society, the Rose + Croix Catholique, which he claimed to be the original Rosicrucian society. This led to endless bickering between the two factions, an episode that is known as the 'War of the Roses' among historians of esotericism.[1161] Neither Guaita cum Papus, nor Péladan, however, were pleased to see themselves accused of practising voodoo murder in all the Paris popular press. Papus compiled a booklet and Péladan an article in which both argued the absurdity of these accusations in the light of recent insights in magic.[1162] Guaita, characteristically, reacted more strongly. He retorted with an exasperated public letter that was published in *Gil Blas* of 15 January 1893. 'Everybody knows,' he wrote sarcastically, 'that I surrender myself to the most detestably practices of sorcery; that I stand at the head of a school of Rosicrucians compiled of fervent Satanists devoting their free time to the evocation of the Dark Spirit: […] I play Gilles de Rais on the threshold of the twentieth century; I maintain (like Pipelot with Cabrion) *relations of friendly and other nature* with the redoubtable Docre, the beloved chaplain of Mr. Huysmans; finally, I keep imprisoned in my cupboard a familiar spirit who appears in visible form on my order!' Guaita singled out Huysmans as the main culprit behind this campaign of slander, as it was he who had – deliberately – furnished Bois with the documents that had prompted the latter to go public with his allegations. The marquis concluded as his noblesse obliged him to: 'I am being asked for explanations with loud voices… The best explanations in a case like this are given on the field. This at least is my opinion.'[1163]

With all this upheaval around his death, the verdict issued over Boullan by the Rosicrucian court of honour many years ago suddenly appeared in a wholly different light. Guaita, Papus, and Wirth maintained that the 'execution' implied in this sentence had been the disclosure of Boullan's practices of sex magic to the public – and that this sentence had in fact been executed with the publication of Guaita's *Serpent de la genèse*.[1164] Some of Guaita's phrases in this work support this reading.[1165] Yet part of the public sought to read a more obvious meaning in the verdict, and the thought may not be as absurd as one may think. While the Paris Rosicrucians, on the whole, could be characterized as a discussion group giving conferences and issuing publication on the subject of magic, they did not altogether refrain from practicing what they preached. In the 'Centre of esoteric Studies' led by Papus, fearless experimenters armed with blessed swords and prepared by vegetarian fasts regularly ventured into the realm of 'elementary beings' and 'fluidic larvæ', sometimes feeling mysterious drafts of cold air or seeing columns of grey vapour rise before them.[1166] Péladan

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[1160] Jules Bois, 'L'envoûtement et la mort du docteur Boullan,' *Gil Blas* (11 Jan. 1893) 4803:2 and (13 Jan. 1893) 4805:2; English translation from Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 209.
[1161] McIntosh, *Éliphas Lévi*, 171-176.
[1162] Papus, *Peut-on Envoûter?*.
[1163] Article quoted in a compte-rendu entitled 'Lénvoûtement', *L'Initation. Revue philosophique indépendante des Hautes Études* 6 (XVIII, March 1893) 6, 182-188, here 182-183.
[1164] Papus, *Peut-on Envoûter?*, 17; Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita*, 139: 'Il ne nous était jamais venu à l'idée d'opérer magiquement, ce qui eût contraire à tous nos principes. La punition prévue était la publication des ignominies du Carmel, afin d'éclairer les victimes du pontife halluciné.'
[1165] See in particular *Serpent de la Genèse*, 1:490, 1:520n.

and Guaita, too, had certainly not shunned more practical experiments in their younger years, predominantly involving the famed 'plante attractive' of Van Helmont. Even later on, Péladan once indiscreetly declared to the reverend Arthur Mugnier that he did not understand why the bishop of Paris did not use the spiritual powers invested on him to eliminate the enemies of the Church by astral means.[1167]

More in general, the great similarities in world view that bound Guaita, Péladan, Papus, Boullan, Huysmans and Bois together are striking, in spite of their differences of opinion and their animosity. All were living in a common post-materialistic world where succubæ made regular appearances, fluidic forces could transport death and destruction over vast distances, and incantations and colourful rituals dispended great powers. While it is wildly implausible that the Roscicrucians had been 'continuously' staging ritual murder attempts on Boullan for the past two years, it is not impossible that they lost count somewhere in the succession of 'choc' and 'choc de retour'.[1168] Whether this was likely to have caused Boullan's demise, is a question I would like to leave to the reader's own discernment.

When talking of the spirit world, we might as well pursue another entertaining sideline over which much ink would be spilt: that of the 'familiar spirit' assisting Stanislas de Guaita. According to Oswald Wirth – ever defendant of his master – this rumour had entered the world because Guaita had told the story to his housekeeper in order to scare her away from the closet where he kept his dangerous chemicals.[1169] (Wirth refrained to mention that these 'dangerous chemicals' would probably have been cocaine and morphine.) Guaita, however, thought the rumour had its origin in the fact that his Parisian apartment was *indeed* haunted: from time to time, a white, female shape appeared in his living quarters, presumably of some unknown girl that had once died a foul death in the house.[1170] Huysmans seemed to have been firmly convinced of the truth of the story: when the marquis suddenly died in 1898, he declared that the occultist must have been strangled, in true Faustian manner, by his familiar spirit.[1171] More sober observers thought it probable that Guaita had succumbed to the ravages of long term morphine abuse, while some of his admirers had still another explanation – they suggested that he had been eliminated by the Higher Powers before he could finish the third and final volume of *Le Serpent de la Genèse*, in which the last veil would have been lifted over the cosmic mystery of Good and Evil.[1172]

Let us return to our story. Following Guaita's public challenge, Huysmans had published a letter that may or may not have been intended to be conciliatory. While there was no material

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[1166] Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*, 129.

[1167] Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*, 115, 215.

[1168] Bricaud, *Huysmans, Occultiste et Magicien*, 33(n), citing convincing supportive evidence.

[1169] Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita*, 145.

[1170] Encausse, *Sciences occultes*, 114n, quoting an interview by Gaston Méry with Guaita in *Écho du Merveilleux*, 1 January 1898; idem Dubus, *Gil Blas* (10 Jan. 1893) 4802:1.

[1171] Frick, *Die Satanisten*, 3:222, quoting Bricaud. In *Huysmans, Occultiste et Magicien*, 33, Bricaud mentions that other people proposed yet another explanation for Guaita's death: the magician had succumbed to the 'choc en retour' brought about by his operations against Boulan.

[1172] Thus Victor-Émile Michelet, *Les compagnons de la hiérophanie: Souvenirs du mouvements hermétiste à la fin du XIXIe siècle* (Paris: Borbon-Ainé, s.a. [1938]), 20. Guaita himself had uttered similar fears in his letters to Péladan when he started to work on *Serpent de la Genèse*. In an undated letter to the Sâr, he wrote: 'NOTE QUE JE POURRAIS DÉVOILER LES DERNIERS ARCANES SUR TOUS LES SUJETS QUI Y SONT ÉNONCÉS! Ah! Que Dieu m'en donne la force ! […] . Je t'en supplie, Mérodack, prie pour moi. Je commence une *redoutable* gestation. Irai-je à terme?', finishing his epistle with the request: '*Brûle cette épitre*; si jamais on la trouvait, on me croirait atteint de la folie des grandeurs. – Mais Dieu m'est témoin que je dis vrai, et cela me suffit.' Cf. Guaita, *Lettres inédites au Sâr Joséphin Péladan*, 134-135. Guaita would in fact never finish the third part of his *Serpent de la Genèse*, which was to be called 'Le Problème du Mal', The sketches that remain (recorded in Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita*, 173-186) suggest he envisioned an ultimate reconciliation between the deity and the demon. 'La Rédemption aboutit à la Réintégration, qui est le Paradis. […] Satan-Panthée s'évanouit en Dieu.' (ibidem, 178, 186)

proof that Guaita had attempted to eliminate Boullan by way of magic, he stated, the verdict published by the occultists in *Le Serpent de la Genèse* hardly left room for another interpretation; and whether or not Boullan's death had been the result of these attempts, they at least demonstrated that the Rosicrucians practised Satanism. Naturally, this did nothing to assuage Guaita. 'Mr Huysmans persists in addressing to me the hateful and ridiculous accusation of Satanism,' he wrote in a letter of challenge, 'And I consider this allegation a grave insult, for which he owes me satisfaction.'[1173] He duly proceeded to send his seconds to both Huysmans and Bois. Papus followed his example, while Péladan 'played dumb as he was wont to do' – the Sâr never engaged in duelling because (so he once claimed) his great magical powers would render him invincible, thus reducing the whole duel to simple murder.[1174] Huysmans, however, was not inclined to risk his life or position over the matter, and when the aides located him at his office, he signed a protocol stating he had never intended to put into doubt Guaita's 'character of perfect gentleman'.[1175] Bois initially retracted as well, but being young, from the south, and rashly tempered as he was, he soon repeated his mistake. Publishing another fierce article, he defiantly declared that Guaita defended himself rather awkwardly: 'when his defence against this suspicion of Satanism is at stake, he retreats and tries a diversion. He changes from terrain, he withdraws from the discussion; he drops the pen and takes up the sword, of which he feels himself more sure.' After appealing to the examples of Jesus, Buddha, Pythagoras and Plato, 'your masters and our masters', the journalist continued brazenly: 'I will stand before him, Stanislas de Guaita, on the field, with the same tranquil courage.'[1176]

A settlement in a gentlemanly display of courage had now become inevitable. Pistols were chosen as a weapon, and an appointment for a duel was set for 14 January, close to the Tour de Villebon. Not surprisingly, ominous incidents preceded the engagement. 'You will see that something remarkable will happen,' Bois had already predicted to one of his seconds beforehand, 'From two sides, people are praying for us and busying themselves with incantations.' On their way to Versailles, one of the horses of their carriage suddenly stopped, trembling over his whole body 'as if he was seeing the demon in person'.[1177] This unexplainable phenomenon lasted for twenty minutes, causing Bois and his party to arrive on the field of honour barely in time, and much shaken. The two contestants took their places and shots were fired, but when the smoke cleared, both men were still standing in their places unharmed. A protocol was duly made, containing a declaration of Bois' seconds that their friend 'had only meant to express an appreciation of a philosophical and esoteric order on Mr. de Guaita, but that his criticism did not extend to Mr. de Guaita's character of perfect gentleman, and never would be able to attain to this.'[1178] Guaita, sometime later, declared that he returned his estimation to his adversary, while the latter had 'stood his ground on the terrain'.[1179] A further note of mystery attached itself to the story when the pistols were

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[1173] Michelet, *Compagnons de la hiérophanie*, 26. Michelet was initially one of Guaita's seconds, along with Maurice Barrès, who was an old study friend of the marquis. Guaita's letter of challenge to Huysmans, dated 13 January 1893, can be found in BnF, Fonds Lambert, 30/5 (19/1),

[1174] Quote from Bois, *Monde invisible*, 130; on Péladan's scruples against duelling, see Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*, 203 ; the remark about his invulnerability was made with regard to another personal enemy in an interview entitled 'Chez le Sar', *Le Jour* (28 April 1891). Péladan here also declared that he could not spill blood as a Catholic.

[1175] Michelet, *Compagnons de la hiérophanie*, 27-28. See also Baldick, *Life of J.-K. Huysmans*, 210.

[1176] Article in *Événement*, quoted in 'L'envoûtement,' *Initation* 18 (March 1893) 6:186.

[1177] These and subsequent strange occurrences were recorded by Paul Foucher, one of Bois' seconds, in a short article he published 12 May 1894 in *SudOuest-Toulouse*. The complete text was reprinted in Bois, *Monde invisible*, 409-410; on p. 27-30, the reader can find Bois' own account of the duels. See also Boutet, *Tableau de l'au-delà*, 199.

[1178] Protocol cited in 'L'envoûtement,' *Initation* 18 (March 1893) 6:186-187.

[1179] Michelet, *Compagnons de la hiérophanie*, 30.

returned to the armourer, who subsequently discovered – if we are to believe one of the witnesses – which one of the weapons had misfired, the bullet never having left its barrel.[1180]

A few days later, Papus and Bois met on the Pré Catalan to fight over the same dispute. Again, strange events occurred before the Bois party reached its designated destination: their horse stumbled twice, overturning the carriage and causing Bois to arrive at the place of battle with preliminary injuries. Papus had some reason to look forward to the encounter with confidence, as he was an expert swordsman. Still, his worried mother had had an armoured vest specially prepared for him that looked more like a cuirass than a jacket.[1181] These precautions proved unnecessary, however, for the inexperienced Bois was no match for the Rosicrucian. While 'elegant amazons' looked on in wonder, Bois was wounded twice, once in the outer triceps of his left arm, and once in the left forearm.[1182] His wounds were only slight: but blood had been drawn, so to the relief of all those involved, the hostilities could now cease. In the shade of a tree, the appropriate documents were composed, signed, and countersigned. After that, both adversaries shook hands and went their separate ways. And in this manner ended one of the most bizarre episodes in the history of Satanism, involving an all-too-credulous novelist, colourful Roman Catholic schismatics, eccentric occultists, and at least one slightly shady lady – but not a single actual Satanist.

[1180] Foucher in Bois, *Monde invisible*, 409-410.

[1181] Encausse, *Sciences occultes*, 9.

[1182] Frick*, Die Satanisten*, 2:225. Foucher in Bois, *Monde invisible*, 410: 'Fort heureusement, et quoique les épées fussent magiques, elles ne firent que des blessures peu graves et qui sont depuis longtemps guéries.'

Chapter IV
Unmasking the Synagogue of Satan

Just two years after the much-disputed demise of Satanism-fighter Boullan, Paris saw another world first in the history of Satanism. On the first day of the month Pharmuthi in the year 000895, or 21 March 1895 according to the 'Vulgar Era', a periodical called *Le Palladium régénéré et libre* ('The Free and Regenerated Palladium') saw the light of day. It was subtitled *Lien des groupes luciférien indépendants*, 'Bulletin of Independent Luciferian Groups', and claimed to be the public organ of an inner-Masonic group devoted to Satanism – or rather, devoted to the worship of *Lucifer*, a distinction that seemed to carry great weight for the organisation behind the periodical. We shall hear more about the reasons behind this distinction in the next section of this chapter. For now it suffices to note the absolute novelty of this occurrence. For the first time in modern history, a religious group affiliated to the angel that had forfeited divine favour presented itself openly to the public.

The organisation behind this unprecedented publication called itself the 'Independent Palladist Convention'. It appeared to be a splinter faction split off from the greater body of Palladism, a mysterious organisation of inner-circle freemasons that venerated the fallen angel. On 2 mékir 000894 (21 January 1895, Vulgar Era), the Convention had reached the decision to undertake 'an attempt at public propaganda of the Luciferian principles' – for the time being only by way of experiment and for a period of a year.[1183] As a first step, *Le Palladium régénéré et libre* had been set up to serve both as a vehicle for evangelisation and as a link between existing gatherings or 'family groups' of independent Luciferians. Editor-in-charge was Miss Diana Vaughan, Grand Mistress of Independent Palladism, who mostly filled the pages of her periodical with articles in a strongly polemic vein, directed either against the 'Adonaïtes' (as the publication was wont to style adherents of the Christian religion), or against her former brethren of the Palladium proper. In a gesture of missionary zeal and defiance, sample copies of the bulletin's first issue had been sent to all major Roman Catholic convents in France.

the unveiling of Freemasonry

To a reader who had been vigilantly following the literature on Freemasonry, the fact that an organisation of Lucifer-worshippers was apparently active in Paris would not have been a cause for surprise. For years, a select body of predominantly Roman Catholic authors had been raising the alarm about what was going on in the hidden vaults of the Masonic world. In the previous ten years, their suspicions had been spectacularly confirmed by a steady influx of information from within the secret brotherhood, often brought to light by former Masons who had left the Lodge. In 1885, for instance, Léo Taxil, renowned freethinker, one-time freemason, and founder of France's most infamous anticlerical publishing house, suddenly revoked his former way of life and returned to the Roman Catholic faith of his forefathers. He promptly set out to publish a series of volumes that contained salient disclosures about what went on in the inner circles of Masonry. The first of these, *Les Frères Trois-Points* ('The Three-Point Brothers'), sought to demonstrate that Freemasonry's true philosophy was 'nothing but gross pantheism, to which the adept is gradually brought through a series of

[1183] *Le Palladium régénéré et libre: Lien des groupes luciférien indépendants* 1 (1 Pharmuthi 000895/21 March 1895) 1 (and subsequent issues), back cover text. Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 179, incorrectly gives 1894 as the year of issue of the first number.

ridiculous masquerades, starting with the glorification of the Material and ending with the adoration of Satan'.[1184] Ordinary Masons were unaware of this; only to initiates of the higher grades was the truth disclosed, step by step. Taxil described this process in detail. In the twentieth degree of Masonry, he wrote, the neophyte received the exhortation to shine like the morning star: 'in the sacred name of Lucifer, uproot obscurantism!'[1185] In the twenty-fifth degree, the true key to reading Biblical history was unveiled: it was not Adonaï, the unjust creator, who had helped mankind throughout the ages, but his opponent, the Angel of Light, known throughout history by different names like Ormuzd, Osiris, or Lucifer.[1186] In the twenty-eight degree, the initiate was introduced to the adoration of Baphomet, whom the Freemasons, like their precursors the Templars, venerated as the 'pantheistic and magic symbol of the Absolute'.[1187] Bit by bit, it became clear to the adherent that the true God in Freemasonry was none other than Lucifer. The full extent of this secret, Taxil claimed, was only revealed in the thirty-third and final degree, that of Knight Kadosh. The Knights Kadosh could be seen as the true 'Holy Congregation of the Church of the Grand Architect'; unbeknown to Freemasons of the lower grades, they controlled the Lodges by their resolutions. 'And who inspires those resolutions,' Taxil asked, 'When it is not the Spirit of Evil, Lucifer; this so-called Iblis whom they pretend to be the angel of Light, and […] with whom they stand, by way of their execrable occult practices, in direct communication?'[1188]

In the sequel to his first book, *Le culte du Grande Architecte*, Taxil further supported his central thesis by citing a wealth of Masonic documents; the third book of the trilogy, *Les sœurs maçonnes* ('Sister Masons'), concentrated on the existence of secret Masonic lodges for women. This was certainly astonishing news, for Freemasonry officially was and is an exclusively male reserve. Taxil, however, presented indications for the existence of a top secret network of women's lodges that had the phallus as their central object of adoration and served as a reservoir of sex partners for high-grade Masons during the highly libidinous Masonic festivities.[1189] 'Mothers of France, hide your daughters; here come the Freemasons!' the author exclaimed. In addition to these salient facts, the book furnished further details on the Satanist nature of Masonic ritual. Nothing was what it seemed in Freemasonry, Taxil wrote. The frequent use, for instance, of Biblical psalms and other Christian elements in ritual suggested a modicum of Christian piety. In reality, however, the god addressed in this way was none other that the Grand Architect: in other words, Lucifer himself. 'Thus, through sacrilegious parodies that remind one of the sorceries of the Middle Ages, the sect uses the prayers of the Catholic Church itself to invoke Satan, right in the nineteenth century!'[1190]

[1184] Léo Taxil, *Les Frères Trois-Points*, 2 vols. (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, [1885]), 1:3-4.
[1185] Taxil, *Les Frères Trois-Points* , 2:236.
[1186] Taxil, *Les Frères Trois-Points* , 2:246.
[1187] Taxil, *Les Frères Trois-Points* , 2:251.
[1188] Taxil, *Les Frères Trois-Points* , 2:234.
[1189] Significantly, at about the same time, there were attempts by progressive Freemasons to integrate women in the lodges. In 1882, the feminist Marie Deraismes was initiated in the French lodge 'Les Libres-Penseurs'; after she had been ousted again under pressure from other French lodges, she established a schismatic lodge for women and men in 1893. Named 'Le Droit Humain', this lodge would be the origin of the (equally 'irregular') Co-Freemasonry (cf. Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 173). These have nothing to do with the lodges described by Taxil, as a simple look at the chronology makes clear. The same applies to the Dutch Orde van Weefsters ('Order of the Weavers'), a women-only initiationary organisation closely allied with Dutch Freemasonry; this was only founded in 1947. It must be noted, however, that a separate 'Freemasonry for ladies' had existed in eighteenth-century France, sometimes called 'Rites of Adoption'; the same designation returns in *Les sœurs maçonnes*.
[1190] Léo Taxil, *Les sœurs maçonnes: La Franc-Maçonnerie des dames et ses mystères* (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, [1886]), 318.

After this first wave of divulgations, a comparative lull set in, but in 1891 Huysmans' novel *Là-Bas* burst upon the scene and led to fresh interest in all things Satanic. Taxil reacted with a reprint of *Les sœurs maçonnes*, under the title *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?* ('Are There Women in Freemasonry?'). Not only did he give the book a new title, however, he also grasped the opportunity to present some new, recently disclosed facts on Freemasonry. The most important of these pertained to a secret order within Freemasonry called the Palladium. *Les sœurs maçonnes*, it is true, had already devoted a few pages to the 'Palladic Rite', mentioning that the Order pretended to have been founded in 1637 but in reality dated from 1737, and used the word 'Megapan' as its secret password.[1191] References to the Palladium could be found in a few old Masonic handbooks as well, but most experts held the Order to be defunct. In 1891, however, Taxil disclosed the fact that a 'New and Reformed Palladium' had been established in America. This New Palladic Order was completely devoted to 'Luciferianism', and had surreptitiously managed to find its way into France. 'In a work that appeared in May 1891 and that has attracted much notice,' Taxil explained, 'Mr. Huysmans has made numerous allusions to these assemblies, which are even more secret than those of ordinary Masonic Ateliers. But when he talks about them, the author (I can hardly imagine why) takes care never to pronounce the word 'Freemason'. Every time, he writes 'Rosicrucian' to designate the initiates who practice this kind of Satanism. Now, every Rosicrucian is a Freemason. On the other hand, the term which Mr. Huysmans uses is not of absolute exactness, as the sacrileges that he attributes to them are in reality not imputable to the Chapters of the Rosy Cross, but rather to certain Areopagi of the Kadosh. It is true, one cannot be Kadosh without being at the same time a Rosicrucian; nevertheless, not all Rosicrucians are Kadosh, and not even all Kadosh indulge in Palladism. I hasten to add to this that Mr. Huysmans' unfortunate choice of terms to describe Luciferian Freemasonry is of no further consequence.'[1192]

The newly discovered order, Taxil took care to point out, had nothing to do with the 'hysterics' whose rituals Huysmans had witnessed. On the contrary, the Freemasons of the New Palladium operated in an extremely cool and collected way; furthermore, they did not worship Lucifer as evil, but 'consider him as the Principle of Good and the equal of the God of the Christians, called by them the Principle of Evil'.[1193] In France, the secret association already had three lodges, the most important of these being the Mother-Lodge 'Lotus', named after the delicious fruit of the Lotus-Eaters 'that makes one forget country and religion'.[1194] This Lodge had originally been established in the 1850s by Knights Kadosh who devoted themselves to black magic under the guidance of Brother C***, 'better known in literature under a Israelite pseudonym'.[1195] After his demise, however, it had fallen into disarray, to be resurrected in 1881 by an emissary of the New, American Palladium. Now the new rite was spreading across Europe, eclipsing the slightly older Rite of the Old-Fellows [sic], who were also purely Luciferian and could be identified with Huysmans' waning Order of the Re-Theurgists Optimate.[1196]

The rituals of the new order were not exactly an afternoon tea party. In the true spirit of modern tolerance, the Palladium was open to both men and women. The latter were led to the worship of Lucifer in only five stages, culminating in their initiation to 'Templar Mistress'.

[1191] Taxil, *Les sœurs maçonnes*, 340-349.

[1192] Léo Taxil, *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?* (Paris and Lyon: Delhomme & Briguet, s.a. [orig. 1891]), 209-210. Taxil here confuses the Kabbalistic Rosicrucian Order of Papus and Guaita, against which Huysmans levelled his accusation of Satanism and magical murder, with the 'Knight Rose Croix', the title used to designate the Eighteenth Degree within Scottish Rite Freemasonry.

[1193] Taxil, *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?*, 211.

[1194] Taxil, *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?*, 209(n).

[1195] Taxil, *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?*, 235.

[1196] Taxil, *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?*, 237.

Taxil gave a vivid depiction of the trials the aspirant sisters had to brave during this rite of initiation, which consisted of a series of trials. In the so-called 'Trial of Lazarus', for instance, the female postulant was led to a plateau, the 'Pastos', where a motionless male was waiting in a recumbent pose. 'You see before you a dead man,' the initiatress explains, 'Ecce homo! It is to you to transform him into a living god.' With a huge depiction of Baphomet approvingly looking on and the congregation raising a general acclamation of 'Cain, Cain!', the neophyte then was expected to bring the 'dead man' back to life by performing the sexual act with him. After this part of the ritual, the aspirant Templar Mistress was given a host that she had to pierce with a small ceremonial dagger to the cry 'Nekam, Adonaï, Nekam!' – 'Vengeance, Adonaï, vengeance!'. Subsequently, a Luciferian prayer was offered and the Templar Mistress was taught the duties of her new position, which could be summarized as 'execrating Jesus, insulting Adonaï, adorating Lucifer.' She then solemnly vowed herself to Lucifer: 'To you, Genius of Liberty, I swear to devote myself, by all means at my disposal, whatever they may be, to the annihilation of political despotism and sacerdotal tyranny. And now, o Lucifer, I am your daughter forever.'[1197]

Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie? received some public attention – although the reactions of sections of the Press with Masonic affiliations were rather derogatory, with headlines that spoke sarcastically of 'Masonic Harems'.[1198] Amand-Joseph Fava, the bishop of Grenoble, sent Taxil an approving letter; and Léon Meurin, the bishop of Port Louis in Mauritius, personally visited the author to consult him for his own book, *La Franc-Maçonnerie, Synagogue de Satan*, that would appear in 1893 and confirm most of Taxil's revelations.[1199] Taxil's claims, however unbelievable some of them may have seemed, found further corrobation in a book by an obscure author called Adolphe Ricoux, published in the same year, 1891. The main significance of this book lay in the fact that it quoted the full text of Albert Pike's 'Compilation of Secret Instructions to the Supreme Counsels, Grand Lodges, and Grand Orients', dated Charleston 1890.[1200] Albert Pike (1809-1891) had been Grand Commander of the Scottish Rite in the southern states of the United States and had already been pinpointed as the leading figure of the Palladium by Taxil.[1201] Taxil had also quoted some lines from this secret briefing, but Ricoux had somehow managed to obtain the full text of the document, which provided interesting insight into the hidden agenda of Freemasonry. Freemasonry's mission, Pike specified, was to combat wherever and however it could the temple of intolerance that is Roman Catholicism; special instructions were given to the Palladium's Political Directorate at Rome to monitor the Vatican's activities and do all that was in its power to undo them. Even more intriguing were the hints that could be gleaned from Pike's instructions with regard to dissent simmering within the powerful machinery of Palladism. With solemn ire, the Grand Master orated against the tendency in certain Palladist Lodges, predominantly in Italy, to extend their worship to *Satan* instead of Lucifer. 'It has been brought to our attention that a Lodge in Genoa has pushed its ignorance so far as to even raise a banner saying 'Glory to Satan!' during a public manifestation. In Milan, Mason Brothers staged a declamation and chanted a Hymn to Satan during a feast.'[1202] In contrast to this, the document stressed a strict Luciferian orthodoxy: Satan was a name invented by the priests of Adonaï and an insult to the Good God.

[1197] Taxil, *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?*, 248-267.
[1198] Adolphe Ricoux, *L'existence des loges de femmes affirmée par Mgr Fava, évêque de Grenoble, et par Léo Taxil: Recherches à ce sujet et réponse à M. Aug. Vacquerie, rédacteur du Rappel* (Paris: Téqui, 1891), 17.
[1199] Cf. Léon Meurin, *La Franc-Maçonnerie, Synagogue de Satan* (Paris: Victor Retaux & Fils, 1893).
[1200] Ricoux, *L'existence des loges de femmes affirmée*, 64-95.
[1201] Taxil, *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?*, 208-209.
[1202] Ricoux, *L'existence des loges de femmes affirmée*, 90.

The almost unbelievable extent of worldwide Luciferianism was only made fully clear when the startling revelations of Dr. Bataille started to appear. In this case, the author was no converted Freemason or Palladist; his case was far more extraordinary. Bataille was the pen-name of a medical officer who sailed with the French nautical company Messageries Maritimes. One day, he was called to attend to a dying Italian who declared himself to be damned. The Italian told him that he had been a Freemason, and what is more, a member of the New and Reformed Palladium. Dying now, and repentant of his involvement in devil-worship, he handed Bataille the highly confidential passwords and signs that gave entrance to the secret meetings of the Palladium. After duly consulting his confessor, Bataille decided to use these to investigate the dangerous underworld of Palladism. 'I shall be, I said, the explorer, and not the accomplice, of modern Satanism.'[1203] What followed was a wild ride into the hidden recesses of Freemasonry that brought to light facts that sometimes verged on the improbable and baffled even the most seasoned experts on Masonry.

The printed reportage of this Vernesque 'voyage extraordinaire' into occultism started to appear in separate issues from 1892, under the improbably long title *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle. La Franc-Maçonnerie luciférienne ou les mystères du spiritisme. Révélations complètes sur le Palladisme, la théurgie, la goétie et tout le satanisme moderne. Récits d'un témoin* (which the reader may translate for himself). It is impossible to do justice to the enormous range of topics and 2000-plus pages of *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle* (as we will call it henceforth for brevity's sake) in a few paragraphs. His possession of the secret signs had given Bataille free access to centres of Lucifer-worship all over the world; and to his astonishment, the worship of Lucifer turned out to be the secret core of virtually every non-Christian religious tradition. Bataille visited Hindu fakirs in Indian temples, where he witnessed parodies of the Roman Mass interspersed with liturgical chants to 'Lucif' and gruesome rituals that involved dead bodies. In China, he penetrated the abode of a secret brotherhood that specialized in the massacre of missionaries. In Gibraltar, he was introduced to underground caverns where fiendish-looking, dwarfish outcasts produced chemical and biological weapons for the Palladium. In between these accounts of travel adventures, long, documentary digressions tell about the Luciferian conspiracy that lurks behind spiritism, magnetism, anarchism, feminism, occultism, and modern capitalism.

Most important for our story, however, is the wealth of new information that Bataille offered on Palladism, the 'organised cult of Lucifer the Good God'. Bataille greatly extended on the information already brought to light by Taxil and Ricoux; and his words had the added value of being those of an eyewitness. As a religion, Bataille stressed once more, Palladism was strictly Luciferian, and not to be confused with Satanism pure and simple.[1204] It had its own sacraments (among which the 'Eternal Pact' figured prominently, as well as exorcism rituals to cleanse deserted monasteries and other places of Christian worship of 'adonaïte impregnation'), its own Credo, and its own religious orders.[1205] Among the latter, the 'Godlike enchantresses' deserve special mention, a sort of Luciferian nuns who devoted themselves to sex with demons in the 'Nuptorium', where, according to Bataille, 'indescribable scenes of orgy' took place.[1206] Also of particular interest are the 'Rosy Serpents', an elite corps of Palladist spies who infiltrated into Catholic Convents. 'The leaders of the Re-Theurgists Optimate do not shrink from anything, and imagine and act out the most improbable enterprises,' Bataille noted, 'A few years ago, their maliciousness pushed them so

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[1203] Docteur Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle: La Franc-Maçonnerie luciférienne ou les mystères du spiritisme. Révélations complètes sur le Palladisme, la théurgie, la goétie et tout le satanisme moderne. Récits d'un témoin*, 2 vols. (Paris: Delhomme & Briguet, [1892-1893]), 1:20.

[1204] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle*, 1:170.

[1205] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle*, 2:889, 1:492; the Luciferian Credo can be found on page, 1:126.

[1206] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle*, 1:772-726.

far as to found a Palladic Lodge of little girls in a boarding school run by Catholic sisters. These wretched children, inspired by their criminal parents, concerted to steal the consecrated hosts and experienced an infernal joy in burying these and in feeding them to worms or ants.'[1207] While the political centre of the sect was located in Rome (facing the Vatican), and the administrative directory could be found in Berlin, its 'Supreme Dogmatic Directory' had been established in Charleston, South Carolina, the 'Luciferian Rome'.[1208] It is here that the original Baphomet of the Templars was kept; although Bataille, after inspecting it, expressed doubts about the authenticity of the object. A splendid sanctuary had been erected around this, in the heart of which the holy of holies of Masonic Luciferianism lay hidden. Lucifer himself appeared here every Friday as the clock struck three to instruct the highest dignitaries of Palladism.

In the course of his fact-finding journey, Bataille had the opportunity to become personally acquainted with a great number of high-ranking Luciferians, foremost among them Albert Pike himself, the 'Pope of Satanism'. Bataille described the old man as a 'living enigma', an enthusiastic keeper of birds, on the one hand, but a fearsome practitioner of occultism, on the other hand. He was the great man behind the global centralisation of occult Masonry; the manuscript of his 'Book of Revelations', a true 'Satanic Bible' with diabolical autographs on every page, is conserved in Charleston with devotional care.[1209] A 'diabolical telephone' operated by demons enabled him to keep in close touch with the other Supreme Directors of High Masonry across the globe, foreshadowing in a way the presidential hotlines of later centuries.[1210] The exploring doctor also met two high priestesses of Lucifer who are to play a prominent part in the rest of our story: Sophia 'Sapho' Walder and Diana Vaughan. As Sophie W***, Miss Walder had already been introduced in Taxil's *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?*, where Taxil described her as an 'ardent Lesbian' (hardly surprising, given her byname) whose sole passion was sacrilege. 'Not content with spitting on the host and having others spit upon it, it has occurred several times that she demanded a recently received Female Knight of the Palladium to lay herself down on the Pastos outside the regular initiations and submit to sexual intercourse with a host in her vagina.'[1211] While staying in Charleston, Bataille took an afternoon stroll with this fiery lady, during which she disclosed to him, inter alia, that she was destined by diabolical prophecy to be the great-grandmother of the Antichrist. She then burst into the declamation of a hymn to Satan, even though Pike, as we have seen, had strictly forbidden the use of 'Satan' for the 'Good God'.[1212]

Even more bizarre was the life story of Diana Vaughan, at least as it was told to Bataille by various members of the Palladium. She was said to be the daughter of a Presbyterian minister who descended from the liaison of famous occultist Thomas Vaughan with Venus-Astarte. Diana herself was betrothed to the demon Asmodeus, who jealously guarded his future spouse. Due to this high protection, she had been able to dispense with the sexual initiation rite normally required for the grade of Templar Mistress. On this occasion, she had also refrained from stabbing the Host, claiming that her staunch Protestant upbringing had impressed upon her the utter absurdity of any notion that a piece of wafer could embody the divine presence. This had earned her the enmity of Sophia Walder, who had sought to prevent her graduation to Templar Mistress; but yet again, the divine diabolic intervention of Asmodeus had made sure that Vaughan prevailed.[1213]

[1207] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:779.
[1208] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:379.
[1209] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:328; the term 'Bible Satanique' is from *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle* itself.
[1210] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:392.
[1211] Taxil, *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?*, 393.
[1212] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:382, 1:386-391.
[1213] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:708-722.

Due to colourful content like the above, and its rather romanesque character, the revelations of *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle* met with some scepticism from certain critics. This attitude became hard to maintain, however, when some of the principle personages of the book took the stage themselves. In 1893, Sophia Walder took pen in hand to address several newspaper directors; some of her internal Palladic correspondence was intercepted as well.[1214] Her rival Diana Vaughan proved even more media-happy, and seems to have been engaged in regular correspondence with several anti-Masonic writers.
The background to the increased public profiling of certain Palladists was the internal strife that had broken out within the Palladium after the demise of Albert Pike in 1891. After a brief interregnum, the Italian Grandmaster, Adriano Lemmi, had taken over control of the Palladic world organisation. Pike had always opposed the 'Satanist' element in Italian Palladism; but with Lemmi coming to power, the Palladium moved from Luciferianism into Satanism *sensu strictu*. As a staunchly orthodox Luciferian, Vaughan was vehemently opposed to this change of doctrine. She also claimed that Lemmi had secured his election with swindle and bribery; and that Lemmi himself was a convicted thief, and unworthy of his office. In 1893, she declared herself an 'Independent Luciferian'; with other dissidents, she formed her own body of Luciferians, the 'Free and Regenerated Palladium'.[1215] This renewed Palladium stood for a return to the orthodox worship of Lucifer the 'Good God', and the cleansing of ritual of atavistic, non-rational, or distasteful aspects, like the sexual initiation rites described by Taxil. Luciferianism had to become a respectable public religion. To that end, Vaughan was mandated by the London-based Convent of Independent Palladists to engage in public propaganda. She duly published a compendium of (prudently pruned) Luciferian rituals and prayers and set up an official press organ, the above-mentioned *Palladium régénéré et libre*.[1216] It was in the pursuit of this activity that we encountered Miss Diana Vaughan at the beginning of this chapter, editing the first public utterance of what we can surely call religious Satanism, according to the definition applied in this study.

As is often the sad lot of people who uncompromisingly follow their own principles, Miss Vaughan was soon at loggerheads with her Luciferian co-workers, who seemed strangely attached to their old, somewhat risqué rites. More important, however, Diana herself had started to experience a radical change in spiritual orientation. The Luciferian camp had already incurred a serious defection earlier that year, when Domenico Margiotta, 'Former Sovereign Grand General Inspector of the 33rd Degree of the Accepted Scottish Rite; Former Souvereign Prince of the Order of the Rite of Memphis and Misraim (33^e^:., 90^e^:., 95^e^:.), Former Inspector of the Misraimite Lodges of the Calabrias and of Sicily; Former Honorary Member of the National Grand Orient National of Haiti', etc. etc., announced his conversion

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[1214] Cf. A. C. de la Rive, *La Femme et l'Enfant dans franc-maçonnerie universelle* (Paris: Delhomme & Briguet, 1894) 637-648.
[1215] The 'Protesting Vault' of Independent Luciferians against Lemmi's election and Diana Vaughan's letter of decommission can both be found, although in somewhat truncated English, in Domenico Margiotta, *Souvenirs d'un Trente-Troisième: Adriano Lemmi, chef suprême des Franc-Maçons* (Pari: Delhomme & Briguet, s.a.), 320-351 and 364-365.
[1216] Unfortunately, I was unable to track down this unique 'Receuil des prières lucifèriennes', which none of the world's major libraries seem to have preserved. Its publisher Alfred Pierret, however, later declared that a thousand exemplars had been printed (*Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste Parfaite Initiée, Indépendante* (5 May 1897) 23:720 – in another place, he suggests the number was 2000; A. Pierret, 'Chiffres des divers tirages effectués', *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste Parfaite Initiée, Indépendante* (10 June 1897) 24:745-747). The compendium of prayers is not to be confused with a later publication by Diana Vaughan, *La restauration du paganisme: Transition décrétée par le Sanctum Regnum pour préparer l'établissement du culte public de Lucifer. Les hymnes liturgiques de Pike. Rituel du néo-paganisme* (Paris: Librairie Antimaçonnique, [1896]), which gives the unexpurgated rituals by Pike and is listed separately by Pierret in his overview.

to the Adonaïte faith. He promptly published a book called *Souvenirs d'un Trente-Troisième: Adriano Lemmi, chef suprême des Franc-Maçons* ('Remembrances of a 33:.: Adriano Lemmi, Supreme Head of Freemasonry'), which was a three-hundred-page denouncement of the Italian Grand Master, and followed this up a year later with another volume on his former coreligionists.[1217] When Diana Vaughan herself converted to Roman- Catholicism in June 1895, the nascent church of Lucifer lost its most talented and most outspoken representative. As had happened with Léo Taxil some ten years earlier, it was the study of Joan of Arc that had led her to have doubts about the Luciferian creed. Although Palladism considered Joan a sort of proto-Luciferian, burnt on the stake for her communication with Lucifer's spiritual messengers, a close reading of the sources did not support this interpretation. Moreover, Vaughan started to receive visions of the Maid of Orléans, and discovered that the mere mention of her name caused her fiancé Asmodeus and his fellow-demons to flee in disarray. 'Lucifer is Satan,' she wrote in her diary on the fourteenth of July, 'Indeed, Lord, there is but one God: and you are this God.'[1218]

Vaughan now took the name of Jeanne-Raphaëlle, announced her intention to live a life of Catholic piety, and reinforced the ranks of anti-Masonic writers. *Le Palladium régénéré et libre* ceased to appear and was replaced by a new periodical publication, the *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste Parfaite Initiée, Indépendante* ('Memoirs of an Independent and Completely Initiated Ex-Palladist'). She also published a 'Eucharistic Novena for Penance' (containing prayers to compensate for profaned Communions and other sacrileges by the Masonic sects); a hymn to Joan of Arc; and a volume with further divulgations on Freemasonry, particularly regarding the Italian Prime Minister Crispi (who was unmasked as a pawn and active member of the Palladium).[1219]

It is hardly surprising that some followers of Masonic developments were rather startled by this fast succession of dramatic events. Certain sections of the French and German Catholic press, although traditionally in the antimasonic camp, even expressed the opinion that the mysterious former Grand Mistress of Lucifer did not exist at all. Miss Vaughan herself was unable to refute these allegations: she remained hidden in a convent for the time being, as she was now a fair target for Masonic assassins sent out to enact the traditional vengeance reserved by the sect for those that betrayed her secrets. Denying her existence and drowning her voice, however, was precisely what Freemasonry wanted, she declared from her place of hiding. Moreover, a fair number of witnesses had spoken to her in person, including Léo Taxil, Domenico Margiotti, and her editor, Alfred Pierret, whom she had visited at his office to arrange for the publication of *Le Palladium régénéré et libre* ('She impressed me as a charming person,' Pierret remembered later, 'Fairly tall, slim, simply dressed, and although her mantle of black wool made a great deal of hustle, she sat herself down with ease.').[1220] In her pre-Christian days, moreover, the worthy Pierre Lautier, President of the Order of the

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[1217] Margiotta, *Adriano Lemmi* (the impressive list of Masonic titles cited before is from the frontispiece of this work); and idem, *Le Palladisme: Culte de Satan-Lucifer dans les triangles maçonniques* (Grenoble: H. Falque, 1895).

[1218] Diana Vaughan, *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste Parfaite Initiée, Indépendante* (July 1895) 1:13.

[1219] Diana Vaughan (Jeanne-Marie-Raphaëlle), *La Neuvaine Eucharistique pour réparer* (Paris: Librairie Antimaçonnique, s.a. [1895]); idem, *Le 33^{e} :. Crispi: Un Palladiste Homme d'état démasqué. Histoire documentée du héros depuis sa naissance jusqu'à sa deuxième mort (1819-1896)* (Paris: Librairie Antimaçonnique, [1896]). The 'Hymne à Jeanne d'Arc (Contre la Franc-Maçonnerie)' was also published by the Librairie Antimaçonnique, and could be purchased for 3 francs with piano accompaniment or for 1 franc in small format without accompaniment. Its text (with the stirring last sentences 'Let us destroy the Temple of Satan/God wills it: no more Freemasons!') can be consulted in *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste Parfaite Initiée, Indépendante* (September 1895) 3:95-96.

[1220] Cf. *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste Parfaite Initiée, Indépendante* (5 May 1897) 23:717, where Vaughan cites from her diary and gives a complete account of her conversion.

Advocates of Saint Peter, had met her in a hotel in Paris, where she had held a long discourse about the state of Freemasonry. Particularly striking to him had been her refusal to partake of a glass of Chartreuse, an 'adonaïte beverage' according to the adamant Luciferian, since it was produced by a Roman Catholic monastery.[1221] In addition to these eyewitness accounts, photographs of Miss Vaughan were in circulation; and there were also the letters she had sent, posted from London, New York, and other places.[1222]

In September 1896, Roman Catholic experts on Freemasonry from all over the world met in Trent for the first International Anti-Masonic Congress. A special session of the Congress was devoted to the Diana Vaughan Question, which had by now become a hotly debated issue in the field of Masonic studies. The session convened on Tuesday 29 September 1896, at three o'clock in the afternoon. Léo Taxil had travelled to the Italian city to plead the cause of Miss Vaughan, who was said still to be hiding in a convent for security reasons. Taxil again emphasized that casting doubt on Diana Vaughan's revelations was exactly what High Masonry wanted. Two German members of the audience, Canon Berchmann and Reverend Baumgarten, assaulted him with tenacious questions, asking for Miss Vaughan's birth certificate, the name of the priest who had taken her confession, the place where she had received her first communion. Taxil responded with much bravado that he had these documents 'in his pocket' right there, but could not disclose these facts because of fears for Diana's personal safety.[1223] He was prepared, however, to divulge the requested information in a personal meeting with the Cardinal Lazzareschi the following day.[1224] The special session was only brought to a conclusion when a resolution was adopted that left the decision about Miss Vaughan's existence to a special committee of church notables. This committee deliberated endlessly, and came in January 1897 with the verdict that neither Diana Vaughan's existence nor her nonexistence could be sufficiently proven.[1225]

In the meantime, Vaughan herself had not remained inactive. While she continued to pour out revelations in her *Mémoires* (telling how Asmodeus had taken her to Garden of Eden and the planet Oolis, for instance, or breaking the disturbing news that Sophia Walder had recently given birth to the grandmother of the Antichrist in Jerusalem), she also proclaimed her firm intention to put a definitive end to the controversy about her existence. To this purpose, she announced a grand tour of public readings for the coming spring, with a planned itinerary from Paris by way of Cherbourg, Rotterdam, London, Edinburgh, various places in France, and Brussels, to Turin and Genoa, ending in Rome itself. In the issue of 31 March 1897, she

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[1221] A report by Lautier was published in the *Echo de Rome* of 1 January 1894, and reprinted in Bataille's *Revue mensuelle*; Pierre Lautier, 'Une luciferienne,' *Revue mensuelle religieuse, politique, scientifique: Complément de la publication Le Diable au XIXe Siècle* 1 (January 1894) 1:4-6.

[1222] A gravure with Vaughan's portrait had already appeared in Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:705. A somewhat different, more elegant photogravure was published in A. C. de la Rive, *La Femme et l'Enfant dans franc-maçonnerie universelle* (Paris: Delhomme & Briguet, 1894), 705, after prepublication in the *Revue mensuelle religieuse, politique, scientifique* 1 (January 1894) 1:5. It was republished in *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste* (September 1895) 3:82-83. A completely different photograph apparently surfaced three decades later and was published in L. Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie: Lettres inédites publiés par les amis de Monseugneur Jouin* (Chaton: British-American-Press, 1934), facing 265; as its author, 'L.B. Unterveger, Trento' is indicated.

1223 See the short report in Union Antimaçonnique Universelle, *Actes du Ire Congrès antimaçonnique international, XXVI-XXX Septembre M DCCC XCVI, Trente*, 2 vols. (Tournai: Desclée, Lefebvre & Cie, 1897-1899), 2:94-95

[1224] This meeting never took place, owing to circumstances about which the parties concerned gave differing accounts. Cf. *Diana Vaughan: Haar persoon, haar werk en haar aanstaande komst* (Leiden: J.W. van Leeuwen, 1897), 29-33, and the subsequent section of this chapter.

[1225] Cf. Hildebrand Gerber [= Hermann Gruber], *Betrug als Ende eines Betruges. Oder: Die Kundgebung Leo Taxil's vom 19. April 1897 under der Hereinfall, bezw. die Schwindeleien, deutscher 'Kulturkämpfer' anläßlich derselben* (Berlin: Germania, 1897), 107-108.

furnished the curious reader with the program of the announced readings as well. Photographic slides would be included, mainly with reproductions of official documents, but also including the engagement picture of Diana with her demonic lover Asmodeus (Nr. 37) and a glorious depiction of 'His Holiness Pope Leo XIII, holding the Encyclical *Humanum Genus*, from which flashes of lightning issue', throwing down the 'hydra of Freemasonry'.[1226] Léo Taxil would also appear at the first meeting in Paris, in order to elucidate his recent decision to abandon the antimasonic struggle after twelve years of continuous activity, due to the ever more vocally expressed doubts of his co-combatants regarding his personal integrity. 'Come what may, I will make my public appearance,' the ex-Mistress of Luciferianism assured.[1227]

The final revelation of Diana Vaughan's existence turned out to be a spectacular occurrence indeed. On 19th April 1897, a large crowd assembled in the Hall of the French Geographical Society, where the event was to take place. This first instalment of Miss Vaughan's European tour was reserved for invitees and members of the press only, with representatives of both antimasonic and non-affiliated periodicals present. First, a new American typing machine was raffled among the journalists present: Ali Kemal, the correspondent for the Istanbul-based *Ikdam*, held the lucky number. After this, a technician prepared the projector, projecting a gravure of Saint Catherine and Joan of Arc onto the wall, and Léo Taxil duly appeared on stage to address the public. He then revealed the shattering truth about Diana Vaughan and the Palladium. *It had all been a grand joke.* Not only was Diana Vaughan his personal creation, but the revelations of Dr. Bataille and Margiotta had been dictated by him as well. A secret Masonic organisation of Luciferians and Satanists *did not exist* and *never had existed*.
While the public cheered or shouted angry interjections, Taxil sketched the trajectory by which he had set up his phenomenal prank. His own conversion, more than twelve years previously, had already been a fake, partly by way of experiment, partly by way of practical joke. The idea of setting up the grand canard of Palladism and its High Priestess had by then already dawned upon him. Dr. Hacks (on whom more later) and Mr. Margiotta had all been in the plot, and the part of Diana Vaughan had been played by Taxil's personal secretary, 'a rather freethinking French protestant, typist by profession and representative of an American typing machine company'.[1228] With this performance, the curtain had irrevocably fallen on Miss Vaughan and Palladism. 'I have committed infanticide,' Taxil confessed, 'The Palladium is dead now, dead as a doornail. Its father has come to kill it.'[1229]
Upheaval followed this shocking disclosure. Freethinking members of the public intoned satirical antireligious songs; more religiously inclined attendants heaped insults upon the speaker. The audience nearly came to blows – it was a good thing that everyone had been asked to hand over their walking canes when entering the hall – and Taxil had to leave the building under police protection. With a small band of supporters (among whom onlookers noticed a mysterious woman in black), he retreated to the second floor of a nearby restaurant, where they celebrated what could well be styled, for its scope and daring, the hoax of the century. While a sudden downpour swiftly cleared the mob from the streets, other guests still had not left the hall of the Geographical Society. They could not believe the presentation had ended and were waiting for the slide show to begin.[1230]

[1226] Diana Vaughan, 'Ma manifestation public,' *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste* (31 March 1897) 21:670-671; and also Alfred Pierret, 'Le conférence du 19 avril,' *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste* (10 June 1897) 24:748-751, there 749-751.
[1227] Vaughan, 'Ma manifestation public,' 604.
[1228] Taxil's speech was published in *Le Frondeur* of 25 April 1897; the complete text can be found in Eugen Weber, *Satan franc-maçon: La mystification de Léo Taxil* (Paris: Julliard, 1964), 155-183 (quote on p. 157).
[1229] Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 183.
[1230] Pierret, 'Le conférence du 19 avril,' *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste* (10 June 1897) 24:748.

Taxil before Palladism[1231]

Thus ended this spectacular fairy tale from the history of Satanism. Although I do not believe I have deceived any reader who has read more than a few odd pages on the history of Satanism, I deliberately chose to present the story of Palladism as I did. With the exception of the two volumes by Bataille, the Taxil hoax was presented to the public in seemingly quite serious publications that included semi-academic annotation and copious references to both Catholic and external sources, the latter in many cases (allegedly) stemming from within Freemasonry. For the unaware reader in Taxil's day, one can imagine, this crafty edifice may have looked quite convincing.

We will not test the reader's vigilance in such a devious way again in this chapter; below, we once again restrict ourselves to the sober realities of historical fact. This is not something to regret. The true story of Taxil's life and of the set-up of his giant hoax might be at least as Romanesque as his stories of mystification. In the following sections, we look behind the scenes of Taxil's masquerade, investigate the trajectory he followed to build up his Palladist palace of deception, explore the sources that he may have used and the personal motivations he may have had, and ask ourselves how it was possible that his improbable inventions were believed for so long by such an extensive readership. Trying to answer these questions will give rise to other questions, some of which will lead us into unexpected territory. The most fitting way to start our investigation, however, is with a short biographical account of the inventor of Palladism.

Léo Taxil was born Marie-Joseph-Antoine-Gabriel Jogand-Pagès in 1854 in the French port Marseille, in a wealthy Roman Catholic merchant family with monarchist and clericalist tendencies. The young Gabriel was sent to the best Catholic private schools in Marseille that money could buy. This education, however, did not have the desired effect, and at a surprisingly young age, Gabriel Jogand developed into a political radical and a freethinker with fierce anticlerical inclinations. In 1868, when he was only fourteen years old, he was apprehended by the French police during an attempt to reach Belgium to join the exiled political activist Henri Rochefort. Because of his manifest revolutionary tendencies, he was sent to a juvenile correctional institute at Mettray, near Tours. In a later, doubtlessly thoroughly romanticized account of his earliest steps into antireligious agitation, Taxil imputed his anticlericalism to a visit he received during his detention from a Roman Catholic priest. The priest rebuked the self-declared 'materialist' for his stubborn refusal to attend Mass; after this confrontation, Taxil solemnly swore vengeance on the man who had mocked

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[1231] Taxil has been a bit neglected by academic historiography, but the few modern historians who have written about him at some length generally agree on the basic facts regarding his life and Luciferian fabrications. W.R. Jones, 'Palladism and the Papacy: An Episode of French Anticlericalism in the Nineteenth Century,' *Journal of Church And State* 12 (1970) 3:453-473, and David Allen Harvey, 'Lucifer in the City of Light. The Palladium Hoax and 'Diabolical Causality' in Fin de siècle France,' *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 1 (2006) 2, 177-206, fail to add substantial new insights to the already extant literature in French. Massimo Introvigne's chapter on Taxil in his *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 143-208, is the best of his book and an excellent introduction to the subject and its current state of research. All three rely heavily on Eugen Weber's pioneering study *Satan franc-maçon*, which presents the historical facts and many contemporary documents. A few other articles in academic conference volumes deal with minor points of the story; references to these will be given in the appropriate notes. Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, provides important source material, although the conspirationalist views of its compiler should be treated with proper scepticism.

As a historical figure, Taxil is still begging for a proper biography, and his creation Diana Vaughan for a proper monograph. A lot of questions surrounding the Palladism affaire are still not satisfactorily answered, and a hoard of contemporary literature in virtually every Western language awaits the patient researcher. Due to time limitations, I only consulted the most important publications from this wealth of material. With regard to the basic historical facts, I have based my statements on Weber as well, unless otherwise noted; where I propose a reading that differs from that of the existing literature, this has been duly marked in the footnotes.

him in his cell, and on all other ecclesiastics too, those men who 'victimize children under the pretext of belief and faith, and turn fathers into bullies'.[1232] When his father retrieved him from his detention to send him to another school, his revolutionary political stance and his total lack of discipline soon got him expelled again.

Jogand's great gift for journalism and publicity soon became apparent as well. At only sixteen, he founded a satirical journal called *La Marotte*, solidly anticlerical in content. It was at this point that he adopted the pseudonym Léo Taxil. *La Marotte* was banned in 1872, but was soon replaced by another journal, *La Jeune République*. Henceforth, Taxil led the life of a 'petit journaliste': 'lawsuits, duels, legal fines, expedients of every description'.[1233] The journals he issued were forbidden one after another by the authorities, and in 1876, Taxil fled to Geneva to escape an eight-year prison sentence. In the Swiss town, he tried to set up a Garibaldian revolutionary cell. Meanwhile, he married a working-class woman who already had several children by other men.

According to the French dictum, a person from Marseille is prone to be a liar; and Taxil's great gusto for mystification, sometimes bordering on downright fraud, was already becoming noticeable in this period. In his long speech of 19 April 1897, Taxil sketched a whole career of practical jokes. In 1873, he claimed, he had convinced the population of Marseille that giant sharks were roaming the sea before the Mediterranean town; and while in Switzerland, he had launched the rumour that the ruins of an old Roman city had been discovered on the bottom of Lake Geneva.[1234] Not all his hoaxes, however, were of this glorious kind. He was eventually expulsed from Switzerland because of his 'immoral advertisements' for a product called 'Harem Sweets' – aphrodisiacal pills of harmless but presumably ineffective content.[1235]

Profiting from the general amnesty for political prisoners that the new Republican government had proclaimed, Taxil returned to France in 1878 and took up domicile in Paris. He now decided to devote himself fully to anticlerical propaganda. Together with his wife, he established an 'anticlerical bookshop', and started to publish the 'Anticlerical Library', a series of cheap popular publications and leaflets 'energetically directed against superstition and sectarians' and mostly written by himself.[1236] The quotes from Voltaire ('Crush the infamous!') and Gambetta ('Clericalism, that is the enemy!') adorning the series' frontispiece accurately reflected the Library's program. Browsing the titles in its prospectus gives a fair impression of their character, which ranged from the simply irreverent; for example, *The Life of Jesus*, 'a satirical and instructive parody of the Evangels'; by way of the blatant, *No More Cockroaches!*, *Down with the Calotte!* (featuring a diatribe against the sexual abuse of minors by clerics); to the downright pornographic, *The Incestuous Monk* (subtitled 'Orgies in the Convent'), and *The Secret Loves of Pius IX, by a former valet of the Pope*, which told how Vatican henchmen abducted innocent maidens to pleasure His Holiness, who was, however, only able to find sexual gratification in the hands of an experienced Jewish prostitute.[1237] Taxil also produced an *Anticlerical Marseillaise*, issued a journal, the *Anti-Clérical*, and had a small assortment of merchandise that included 'anticlerical envelops' with anti-Catholic

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[1232] Léo Taxil, *À bas la calotte!* (Paris: Strauss, 1879), viii-x.
[1233] Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 193.
[1234] Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 157-159.
[1235] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 169; Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 194.
[1236] Léo Taxil, *Pie IX devant l'histoire: Sa vie politique et pontificale, ses débauches, ses folies, ses crimes*, 3 vols. (Paris: Librairie Anti-Cléricale, [1883]), 1:214.
[1237] These titles can be found in the catalogue of the publishing house, consulted by me in Taxil, *Pie IX devant l'histoire* , 1:207-215. The French titles are: *La Vie de Jésus*, *La Marseillaise anti-cléricale*, *À bas la calotte!*, *Plus de Cafards!*, *Le Moine Incestueux*, *orgies de couvent* ('by Edmond Ploert; this novel is imitated from the English'), and *Les amours secrètes de Pie IX, par un ancien camérier du Pape* (Paris: Librairie anti-cléricale/Librairie populaire, [1881]). For more information on the activities of the 'Bibliothèque anticlericale', cf. Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 195-198, and Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 170.

comic drawings.[1238] He was also one of the instigators of the Anticlerical League, an independent organisation of freethinkers that sought to combat 'clerical oppression'.

This was, in brief, the story of the man who almost single-handedly invented the most infamous organisation of Satanists of the nineteenth century. What follows is slightly more controversial. On 23 April 1885, Taxil announced his conversion to Roman Catholicism. It was the study of the life of Joan of Arc for yet another anti-Catholic work that had brought him into the orbit of grace, he claimed, as well as the continuous prayer of some pious relatives. He retracted all his antireligious writings and liquidated his publishing house. The Church, at first, was rather suspicious of this unexpected convert. The old country vicar initially chosen by Taxil to be the Ananias on his road to Damascus was replaced by an experienced Jesuit Father who submitted the former freethinker to intensive soul searching. Taxil finally managed to convince him of his sincerity, he claimed in later reminiscences, by confessing a fictional murder.[1239] His final admittance into the fold of the church was greeted by many French Catholics as a miracle in itself, and in 1887, the ancient pamphleteer-cum-pornographer was even granted an audience by Pope Leo XIII. Meanwhile, his former brethren against Christ were thoroughly shaken by his lapse into faith. In a tumultuous meeting on 27 July 1885, the Anticlerical League deplored his 'betrayal of the cause of Free Thought and of his co-antireligionists'. Bewildered, some insisted that he must have been bought by Rome; others raised the hypothesis that he had been a clerical infiltrator all the time; a few of his friends seriously considered the possibility that he had gone mad. Taxil, who surprisingly attended the meeting, declared emphatically that he was not mad at all. 'One day, I hope, you will come to see this, if you cannot understand it now.'[1240] Inevitably, the League went on to oust him as a traitor and renegade. Taxil only protested against the accusation of treason, stating that they might not be able to grasp what he was doing at the moment, but would understand it later on.[1241]

Although it has been suggested by some that Taxil's conversion was initially sincere, utterances like these prove that his entrance into Roman Catholicism was part of a game of double play all along.[1242] Regarding his personal motives for setting up such a gargantuan practical joke, different ideas have been proposed. Pecuniary gain usually figures prominently among them. The French police, which had kept Taxil under close surveillance since his early revolutionary ventures, noted in a report of 19 May 1884 that he had run into extreme money trouble. The print number of his anticlerical journal had dropped from 67,000 exemplars to a mere 10,000, and continuous legal bickering had exacted a heavy toll on his financial resources.[1243] In *Confessions d'un ex-libre-penseur* ('Confession of a Former Freethinker'), his 'Catholic' autobiography, Taxil gainsaid these allegations, proving that they were already in circulation as early as 1887; but while he here presents the liquidation of his Anticlerical Bookshop as a token of his radical conversion, other sources simply call it a bankruptcy.[1244]

[1238] Taxil, *Pie IX devant l'histoire*, 1:214: 'Ces enveloppes constituent la plus heureuse innovation que se puisse imaginer pour la propagande. Elles sont illustrés de dessins comiques anti-cléricaux pas Pepin, ménageant la place pour le timbre-poste et l'adresse.'

[1239] Taxil in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 163.

[1240] Léo Taxil, *Confessions d'un ex-libre-penseur* (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, [1887]), 389.

[1241] Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 161.

[1242] Introvigne initially leaves the possibility open, quoting Paul Fesch (1858-1910), Catholic priest and friend of Taxil, but eventually also concludes that Taxil was never genuinely Catholic. *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 174, 206.

[1243] Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 196-198.

[1244] Taxil, *Confessions d'un ex-libre-penseur*, 400; Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 171, referring to *Figaro* 30 (2 August 1884) 215:1. 'Il est permis de croire que l'exploration des œuvres ordurières que l'on décore du nom de productions anti-cléricales, n'est pas absolument ce que l'on peut appeler une bonne affaire,' the newspaper noted, 'Nous revelons, en effet, dans la liste des faillites du 30 juillet, cette mention: *Dame Jogand*

The Catholic publishing market certainly allowed for considerable profits to be made – Huysmans also gained his largest readership with his later, Catholic novels. It is unclear how much money Taxil actually made with his Luciferian saga, but *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle* undoubtedly was a bookstall success, gaining its editors as much as 300,000 franc net. Taxil's co-worker Karl (or Charles) Hacks purchased a restaurant in Montmartre from his share of the revenues, while Taxil seems to have laid hands on a modest *chateau* for his wife and family in this same period.[1245]

It is hard to believe, however, that need or lust for money could have been the sole motive that sustained Taxil in putting up with twelve years of what must have been at times an enormously strenuous double life. Hacks, for one, expressed his conviction that he was sincere in his antireligious zeal. The two motivations are not, of course, mutually exclusive. And a third motivation must certainly be taken into account as well: the pure pleasure of pulling it all off. In his speech of 19 April, Taxil frequently referred to 'the intimate joy that one experiences when neatly fooling one's adversary, without malice, just to amuse oneself and have a bit of a laugh.'[1246]

While there can be little doubt that Taxil was bent on sabotage from the beginning, it would be a fallacy to think that he had meticulously planned his set-up of Luciferian Freemasonry beforehand. The evidence, at least, strongly indicates otherwise. Taxil himself told his audience on 19 April that he had entered into his adventure 'a bit at a venture', planning to withdraw himself 'as soon as the experience had been made': 'But then, the sweet pleasure of the joke getting the better of me and dominating everything completely, I lingered longer and longer in the Catholic camp, more and more extending my plan for an amusing as well as instructive mystification and allowing it to obtain ever grander proportions, as dictated by the events that rolled on.'[1247] Even Freemasonry, while certainly prominent, was not at first the overarching theme it was later to become. Taxil tried his hand at several other issues as well, and published books on the corruption of the French Republic and on progressive politics, the latter pertaining to the unmasking of 'the real Republican programme proposed by the 46 radical republican groups and federations of Paris'.[1248] His new journal *La petite Guerre* ('The Small War') devoted as much space to anarchists and freethinkers as to Freemasons in its first issues, and only obtained the subtitle *Popular Organ of the Struggle against Freemasonry* in July 1888. Nor was the Satanist (or Luciferian) character of Freemasonry such a prominent feature from the start. While the formal worship of Lucifer in Masonry is already mentioned in Taxil's first books on the subject, much more emphasis is laid on the political machinations of the organisation and its propensity for moral corruption.

Taxil himself claimed that it was his visit to the Pope that had finally convinced him to pursue the Satanism trail for real. At the Vatican, Cardinal Rampolla, Leo XIII's Secretary of State, had praised his first three books on Freemasonry, adding that the facts he had described had long been familiar to the Vatican, even the most improbable ones. Cardinal Parocchi had taken the same line, while showing particular interest in the question of Female Freemasonry;

(Marie-Jeanne Besson), séparée de biens, libraire, rue des Écoles, 26 et 25 […]. Mme Jogand, susnommée, est marié avec M. Léo Taxil, lequel a acquis une célébrité relative dans le monde des 'mangeurs de prêtres'.'

[1245] Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 207n, Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 176. In a letter to Father Gabriel de Bessonies from 24 April 1895, Taxil claimed to be in dire straits financially; he also claimed the *chateau* had been an inheritance, which he had recently been forced to sell for an inferior price – Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 49-50.

[1246] Taxil in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 156.

[1247] Taxil in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 156.

[1248] Léo Taxil, *La République se démasque ou le vrai programme républicain exposé par les soixante-treize fédérations et groupes républicains radicaux-socialistes de Paris et expliqué avec toutes ses conséquences* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, s.a.). I did not have a chance to consult this publication myself, but it is listed in the catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, under notice number FRBNF34036105.

but Leo XIII had been most adamant where the devil was concerned, insisting on the satanically-led nature of Freemasonry, and muttering the ominous phrase 'the devil is there' with a peculiar intonation on the word 'devil'.[1249] This portrait clearly has the traits of a caricature, although it may contain, as we shall see, more than a grain of truth. Yet it seems strange that it took Taxil three years after this audience to publish his first description of Luciferian Palladism in *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?*, a book that was, moreover, not much more than a slightly reworked version of his earlier book *Les sœurs maçonnes*. Evidently, the direct spark for the Palladic undertaking was provided by Huysmans' novel, which had been published earlier that year and had proved the potential of 'Satanic' themes to gain large audiences.[1250]

The decision to use Freemasonry as the institutional background for this Luciferianism certainly owed much to the public and private mutterings of the Papacy, as we will see more clearly later on. Taxil, however, also had his own history with the Lodge. In the days before his conversion, his anticlerical activities had gained him some approval among the more radical elements within French Freemasonry. In 1878, he was guest of honour at a Lodge in Béziers, and in 1880, he affiliated himself with the Paris Lodge 'Les Amis de l'Honneur Français'. His initiation to the degree of Apprentice took place on 7 February 1881. Even on this occasion, if we are to believe Taxil's later reminiscences, his indomitable spirit of irreverent mockery did not fail to show: when he noted a spelling mistake in the inscriptions of the Chamber of Reflection, he took the skull that was given to the initiate to reflect upon and jotted down on it with pencil: 'The Grand Architect of the Universe is kindly asked to correct the mistake in orthography on the 3rd panel from the left.'[1251] Not surprisingly, he was soon at odds with the Lodge; already on 28 April, he was forbidden to hold conferences at lodge meetings, and in January 1882, he was declared 'expulsed for indignity'.[1252] Some rather muddy episodes with a distinctly Taxilian flavour provoked this expulsion: an affair of plagiarism, in which Taxil was accused of faking letters from Victor Hugo and Louis Blanc, and the fact that Taxil chose to run as a candidate in a local election *against* an official Masonic candidate. The real reason for the Grand Orient's sudden hostility, Taxil later maintained in his 'Catholic' memoirs, was his persistent refusal to put his Anticlerical League under the umbrella of French Freemasonry.[1253]

In his final disclosure in 1897, Taxil would style these differences as 'rows over nothing', and deny that he had any intention of taking revenge on his former three-pointed brothers. He would also be rather laconic about the consequences of his hoax for Freemasonry. Apart from the fact that his mystifications had held Catholic Antimasonism up to total ridicule, he claimed that his publications had had a sanitary effect on the internal affairs of the Lodge, contributing to reforms that suppressed 'superannuated practices'.[1254] It might be wise, however, not to accept Taxil's utterances in this (or any) matter at face value. While the Church was undoubtedly his main target, he may well have considered Freemasonry a legitimate secondary one. After all, even in France, Freemasonry remained in essence a semi-esoteric group, with many religious or pseudo-religious 'superannuated practices'. Taxil can surely be considered a devoted antireligionist, and nothing suggests that he deplored having made Freemasonry the temporary butt end of his gigantic joke. In fact, his earliest anti-Masonic publication, a comic novel completely devoid of any specific Catholic content, may well predate his so-called conversion.[1255] And how are we to explain otherwise his publication

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[1249] Taxil, cited in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 167-168.
[1250] Weber agrees, *Satan franc-maçon*, 208.
[1251] Taxil, *Les Frères Trois-Points*, 1:39-41.
[1252] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 171.
[1253] Taxil, *Confessions d'un ex-libre-penseur*, 217-218, 315-341.
[1254] Taxil, quoted in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 165.

of French Masonic membership lists, gleaned by assiduous labour from the Lodge's internal publications? It is hard to see the joke in this potentially harmful practice, which seems to have been inaugurated by Taxil and subsequently taken over by other organs of the Catholic Press.[1256] Whether out of personal or ideological motives, these facts suggest that Taxil did not fail to grasp the opportunity to settle some old accounts with the Ancient Brotherhood.

excursus: Taxil's sources

For the construction of his Palladic universe, Taxil pillaged a wide variety of sources. Firstly, he used authentic Masonic publications and catechisms, works that were not particularly secret but often fairly hard to find: these he would cite at length, stressing a few odd sentences that could be interpreted at their most devious, and adding his own comments and some carefully selected historical facts taken completely out of context. He also took great avail of earlier antimasonic literature and of the work of some of his contemporaries who pursued similar careers, particularly Paul Rosen, a mysterious character of whom not much is known with certainty – he seems to have been born in Warsaw and to have lived in Istanbul before coming to Paris, and claimed to have been both a Jewish rabbi and a 33º degree Freemason before converting to Catholicism.[1257] The idea of portraying Albert Pike as Black Pope of Satanism was almost certainly picked up by Taxil from Rosen's books, and he also seems to have purchased some rare Masonic works from the former rabbi.[1258]

Thus far, Taxil's methods do not differ much from those of a rather one-sided academic historian, and his first three books on Freemasonry were a correspondingly dreary read; but from 1891 on, Taxil's material became increasingly colourful. Yet here as well, he mostly did not bother himself with originality. We have already noted the importance of J.K. Huysmans' epoch-making novel. *Lá-bas* not only inspired Taxil to relaunch the Satanism theme, but it also furnished many elements of Taxil's descriptions. Thus we see the recurrence of the famous Re-Theurgists Optimate, a designation that is used for the Odd-Fellows in *Are There Women in Freemasonry?* and for the Palladists proper in *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*.[1259] The peculiar name had first been uttered by Vintras in visionary trance several decades previously, then penned by his followers in privately circulated notebooks, and subsequently conveyed by Boullan to Huysmans in a letter; the latter eventually inserted it in his novel. There was no other place where Taxil could have found it.[1260] More subtle Huysmaniana include the figure

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[1255] Léo Taxil and Tony Gall, *Les admirateurs de la lune à l'Orient de Marseille: Histoire Amusante d'une Loge de Francs-Maçons* (Paris: Agence Centrale des Bons Livres, s.a.). This novel was reissued several times during the period of Taxil's 'Catholic' activity, and the copy I consulted in the Bibliothèque nationale de France clearly dated from this time. It is unclear to me what its original year of publication was. Taxil's publications are mostly undated and were often frequently reprinted, with or without alterations. The rather buffoonish style and content of the book, however, and the total lack of the pious interspersions that characterize all of Taxil's 'Catholic' works, strongly suggest that it was not prepared for a specifically Catholic readership.

[1256] Taxil already started to publish lists of Masons in *La Petite Guerre* 1 (Sunday 10 April 1887) 11, and subsequent issues. Similar lists mentioned by Michel Jarrige in other Catholic periodicals are all from later dates. Cf. Michel Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente: Croisade de la revue* La Franc-Maçonnerie Démasquée *(1894-1899)* (Paris: Éditions Arguments, 1999), 191-194.

[1257] Cf. the sparse biographical data in Pierre Barrucand, 'Quelques aspects de l'antimaçonnisme, le cas de Paul Rosen,' *Politica Hermetica* 4 (1987): 91-108, which was also the source for Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 163-166.

[1258] Cf. Paul Rosen, *Satan et Cie. Association Universelle pour la destruction de l'ordre social: Révélations complètes et définitives de tous les secrets de la Franc-Maçonnerie* (Paris: Veuve H. Caterman, 1888), 317, where he calls Pike 'Pope of Freemasonry' and attributes to one of his books 'horrors such as Satan only could have dictated to him'. In *L'Ennemie Sociale: Histoire documentée des faits et gestes de la Franc-Maçonnerie de 1717 à 1890 en France, en Belgique et en Italie* (Paris: Bloud & Barral, 1890), 260-261, Rosen would again describe 'his Satanaty' Albert Pike as an anti-Pope, 'the representative of Satan on earth facing the representative of God on earth'.

[1259] Taxil, *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?*, 237; Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:11.

of Sophie 'Sapho' Walder in *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?*, the 'ardent lesbian' and ditto Luciferian delighting in sacrilege, who is an evident spin-off from Hyacinthe Chantelouve; her habit of vaginally introducing the host is another clear reminder of *Là-Bas* (Taxil either did not pick up Huysmans' original anal undertones, or considered them unsuitable to copy). In *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, Huysmans himself would make a brief appearance in the chapter on 'Non-organised Satanists', as 'an occultist [who is] more of a researcher and an investigator than a practitioner': like Bataille himself, the text noted, Huysmans has gone undercover to study the devil-worshippers from close-by, 'but in another milieu'.[1261] An accompanying engraving showed him side by side with Papus, his sworn enemy. It appears from his correspondence that Huysmans had submitted the photograph that was used to make this portrait himself, after the engraver had requested it.[1262]

Huysmans was not the only author that furnished Taxil with inspiration and raw material. Alphonse Constant a.k.a Éliphas Lévi also deserves pride of place in this list. The father of occultism was featured as a real person in Taxil's works, first as 'brother C***' with the Jewish pseudonym in *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?* and from *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle* on with his full name: in both works, he was portrayed as the founder of the first Satanist Lodge in France.[1263] Far more important, however, was the rich mine of ritual paraphernalia and occult terminology that Taxil found in Lévi. In his first trilogy on Freemasonry, Lévi's esoteric hand gesture is reproduced as the secret recognition sign of the Palladists; the inverted pentagram (the 'signature of the devil') made its inevitable appearance; and in the Palladic nomenclature, Taxil with some creative ingenuity replaced the Masonic three points with the inverted triangle, a further symbol of 'Satanic' inclination originating with Lévi.[1264] Taxil's Luciferians and Satanists frequently quote Lévi verbatim in their discourses, and afterwards bend down to worship a Baphomet idol that is copied directly from Lévi's original engraving.[1265] Lévi's books may also have transmitted much of the lore from older demonology that can be found in Taxil's works, for instance, the picturesque diabolical signatures that adorn the pages of the *Palladium régénéré et libre* and ultimately derive from the presumed demonic pact of Urbain Grandier.[1266] All this without a single source reference, of course.

[1260] Meurin, *La Franc-Maçonnerie, Synagogue de Satan*, 215-216 suggests that the Re-Theurgists are already mentioned in *Les Frères Trois-Points* from 1885, but the bishop is once again sloppy in his references here.

[1261] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 2:754.

[1262] Letter from 'Artiste Peintre' G. Dubouchez to J.K. Huysmans, 4 July 1894; BnF, Fonds Lambert, 31/48. The portrait can be found on p. 793 of the second volume of *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*.

[1263] Taxil, *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?* 235; Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:39, 1:341, 2:607-726. Taxil's debt to Lévi, Huysmans, and a plethora of other authors was already suggested by Legge in his article 'Devil worship and Freemasonry,' 479-480. The actual nature of Lévi's involvement with Freemasonry is described in Chacornac, *Éliphas Lévi*, 191, 200-201. Lévi was initiated on 14 March 1856 in the lodge Rose du Parfait Silence, declaring on this occassion, 'au grand étonnement de l'assistance': ' Je viens rapporter au milieu de vous les traditions perdues, la connaissance exacte de vos signes et de vos emblèmes, et par suite, vous montrer le but pour lequel votre association a été constituée…'. He regularly attended the rites, but quit the Craft on 21 August 1861, according to his own post-factum declaration 'parce que les Francs-Maçons, excommuniés par le pape, ne croyaient plus devoir tolérer le catholicisme'. In 1871, he would finish a work entitled *Le Gremoire Franco-latomorum*, which explains Mason rites from an esoteric viewpoint (ibidem, 268).

[1264] Taxil, *Les Frères Trois-Points*, 2:285, and Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:182 feature the secret hand sign; Taxil, *Les sœurs maçonnes*, 322 mentions the 'signature of Lucifer'; *Les Frères Trois-Points*, 2:255 talks about the inverted triangle (on the significance of which, Taxil writes, the reader can consult any tract on the occult sciences – 'Or rather don't: don't open any of these horrifying books full of diabolical invocations, and apprehend that the triangle pointing down is the emblem of Satan.')

[1265] See, for instance, Taxil, *Les Frères Trois-Points*, 2:251-252, where an allocation on Baphomet ('the magical and pantheist symbol of the Absolute') that seems to be copied straight from Lévi is put into the mouth of the Masonic initiator.

It is difficult to say what other or later occultists were utilized by Taxil, who had been personally interested in esotericism during his youth.[1267] Nor are his other sources always easy to pinpoint. Like virtually every progressive intellectual in nineteenth-century France, Taxil was evidently familiar with the traditions of Romantic Satanism; and the utterances and descriptions of his Luciferians, with their frequent invocations of the 'genius of liberty' and the 'generative principle' against the 'god of superstition', often read as a persiflage of the discourse on Satan that had emerged from the greenhouse of Romanticism. In fact, works like *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle* and Margiotta's *Le Palladisme* are a veritable *Fundgrube* of obscure references to Satan in nineteenth-century counterculture (some of which are mighty hard to relocate for today's historian).[1268] In the highest degrees of Freemasonry, for instance, the Freemasons call on Lucifer with a prayer that is a compilation of infamous passages from Proudhon, the radical anarchist encountered in Chapter II. This time, however, Proudhon is honestly mentioned as their author; but only because he was a prominent Luciferian Freemason anyway, as the reader might have guessed by now.[1269]

While copycatting was without doubt Taxil's most important tool in constructing his imaginary Luciferian universe, it cannot be denied that he displayed a good deal of virtuosity in arranging his material and inventing additional elements. What to think of the *maleaks*, the evil supernatural agents that oppose the demons of the Good God and are venerated as saints and angels by the deceived adonaïtes? Or the *Gennaïth Menngog*, the Litany to the Demons sung at Palladic gatherings, and written in a ritual language apparently invented by Taxil or his co-operators?[1270] As the success of his mystification grew, Taxil increased in boldness, fabricating complete doctrinal statements said to be from Albert Pike, detailed plans of the sect's headquarters at Charleston and other Palladic complexes, a separate Palladic calendar, and an intricate international Palladic hierarchy that freely mixed real-life personages with fictional characters. The printed material that has come down to us, although spanning thousands of pages, probably does not represent the full output of Taxil's fabrication factory. Alfred Pierret, Diana Vaughan's publisher, remembered having received a voluminous manuscript version of the 'Book Apadno', the Palladic Holy Scripture. The mysterious book remained in his hands for six weeks, but was retrieved by letter by Diana shortly after her alleged conversion, and has never been seen or mentioned since.[1271]

Taxil's most important addendum to the lore of Satanism was probably the doctrinal distinction between Luciferians and Satanists that he invented. Huysmans had merely echoed Vintras in *Lá-bas* with his rather vague statement about two factions within Satanism, 'one aspiring to destroy the universe and reign over the ruins, and the other dreaming simply of

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[1266] Taxil could have found the signatures in Lévi, *Dogme et rituel de a Haute Magie*, 2:250-251. Collin de Plancy's *Dictionnaire infernale* is another possible source for these signatures, and also for the numerous stories from folklore, demonology, and Roman Catholic hagiography that helped to fill the pages of *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*.

[1267] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 168.

[1268] I am still looking, for instance, for more information on the oratorio *Lucifer* that is mentioned in *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 2:737-738, composed on behest of the Duke de Camposelice by the composer Paul Benoît, with a libretto by the Duke, and performed on 7 May 1883 in the Trocadero by a choir and orchestra of not less than 500 persons. Nor have I yet managed to find the poem on Satan by the French anarchist Clovis Hugues, published in the first number of the (or a) *Revue anarchiste*, and mentioned in the same work.

[1269] Taxil, *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?*, 264(n)-266; Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:219n corrects this by stating that the prayer is an *adaptation* by the Vicomte de la Jonquière after Proudhon. Taxil probably also borrowed from himself, putting parts of his earlier, pre-Catholic books into the mouths of his god-defying Luciferians. A more thorough analysis of the enormous corpus of Taxilian texts might render surprising results in this respect.

[1270] Margiotta, *Le Palladisme*, 97-101.

[1271] Alfred Pierret in *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste* (5 May 1897) 23:721. The publication of this Bible of Lucifer had been announced by Vaughan in a letter published in Margiotta, *Le Palladisme*, 287.

imposing a demonic cult on the world'.[1272] Taxil's distinction between Luciferians and Satanists was much more ingenious and much more believable. He may have found inspiration for this in contemporary esotericism, where ideas that stressed a distinction between Lucifer and Satan were already present in embryo form. Lévi's polyvalent statements on the devil could be read in this way; and theosophy explicitly emphasized the special character of Lucifer as opposed to the Christian Satan. Yet Taxil reworked these notions into a totally fictional but dogmatically rational schism with international and even literary ramifications that apparently sounded so plausible that it would continue to haunt the literature on Satanism for many decades after Taxil's eventual self-exposure.[1273]

the rise and fall of Palladism

The opposition of Luciferians and Satanists had a clear purpose for Taxil. It allowed him to differentiate between bad and better devil-worshippers. For however helter-skelter his venture might have been at the outset, at a later stage the outlines of planned progression are undeniably present in Taxil's deception. With all its amusing sidelines and miniature controversies, the whole construction was essentially meant to introduce Taxil's masterpiece of mystification, the fictive Grand Mistress of Palladism, Diana Vaughan.[1274] Diana's personal profile – Luciferian yet virtuous, attractive yet virginal, pious in her own way, but sadly misled – was clearly designed to evoke the sympathy of Catholic audiences, and all stages of her career, including her later defection and conversion, give the impression of being carefully planned. The execution of this plan involved some most hazardous steps, for instance, that of setting up the short-lived Luciferian bulletin that Vaughan was to direct without giving away Taxil's own involvement. Taxil put out some feelers to the small Roman Catholic publisher Alfred Pierret by way of a middle man, and then visited the publisher himself to arrange the publication in the name of Miss Vaughan. When Pierret expressed his bewilderment about the fact that Taxil, converted Catholic and fierce antimason, lent his support to the publication of a Luciferian journal, the latter declared that it was all part of a bigger plan that would bring back 20,000 Luciferians to the fold of the Church and result in his own sanctification. Astonished, the publisher swore himself to secrecy: but he refused indignantly when Taxil offered him a thousand francs to paint his shop front flaming red and adorn it with small golden triangles.[1275]

By now, Taxil had also found accomplices for his magnificent fraud. The first of these was Karl Hacks, a medical officer of German descent who had been living in Paris for a long time and had displayed some propensity for writing in French: among the results of this were a small volume of dilettante anthropology of religion entitled *La Geste* ('The Gesture'). Although a convinced freethinker, Hacks found nothing inherently implausible in the notion of a devil-worshipping core organisation operating within Freemasonry – at least according to

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[1272] Huysmans, *Là-bas*, 75.

[1273] Copious examples can be given; one of the most recent being Marcello Truzzi, 'Towards a Sociology of the Occult: Notes on Modern Witchcraft,' in *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*, ed. Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), 628-645, there 639, who distinguishes 'Non-Stereotypical Satanists (Palladists or Luciferians)', a group that includes 'Baphometists' and LaVeyan Satanists. Elswehere in this article (p. 635), Truzzi elucidates: 'This form of Satanism has sometimes been called Palladism or Lucifierianism [sic] to distinguish it from the Christian variety', indicating as his source an old encyclopaedia from 1908.

[1274] Taxil seems to have found inspiration in (or exercised his operation with) the case of Barbe Bilger, another woman who was claimed to have deserted Palladism. This story, like many others connected in some way or another to the Taxil hoax, does not seem to have attracted scholarly interest yet. References to it can be found, among others, in A. C. de la Rive, *La Femme et l'Enfant dans la franc-maçonnerie universelle* (Paris: Delhomme & Briguet, 1894), 672-698; Taxil also discusses the Bilger Affair in a letter to Bessonies dated 9 Augustus 1893; cf. Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 21.

[1275] Pierret in *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste* (5 May 1897) 23:708-710.

Taxil, who would later give a mildly improbable account of the way that he recruited the future Doctor Bataille. Taxil's story was that he had told Hacks that he was trying to discredit both Christian gullibility and Masonic Luciferian superstition by telling improbable tales on the latter. He even went so far as to send a letter signed by Sophie Walder to his co-worker, in which the Grand Mistress indignantly protested against the completely distorted picture of Palladism that had been given in *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*. The good doctor was greatly looking forward to meet the vicious Luciferian, and great was his surprise when Taxil eventually told him that Miss Walder did not exist. This story, of course, sounds a bit too delicious to be true. Hacks' importance to Taxil's venture was, at any rate, limited. He mainly provided the travel descriptions that formed the narrative core of *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*: Taxil then embroidered these with tales of Palladism.[1276] After volume one, Hack's activities as co-author seem to have practically ceased, at least if we can believe the subsequent declarations of the doctor himself.[1277]

Another contributor that Taxil recruited was Diana Vaughan herself. Taxil would always maintain that his assistant was indeed called Diana Vaughan, and that this was the sole reason the Grand Mistress had been provided with this name – although others claimed that Taxil had found the name in a Sir Walter Scott novel.[1278] However this may be, Taxil certainly used a female assistant to play the part of Miss Vaughan once in a while, and as the historians have not yet managed or bothered to uncover her real identity, we have only Taxil's post factum avowals to inform us of who or what she was.[1279] Taxil had met her, he said, in the course of his professional activities; she was a typist, and a European representative of an American typing machine company. Her English name went back to an American great-grandfather; her parents had been French Protestants, although she herself was 'rather more of a freethinker'. Taxil gradually interested her in his 'devilries', which amused her greatly; and for 150 francs a month, plus expenses, she agreed to play her part in the fabrication. For this salary, she copied Taxil's manuscripts on a typing machine (then still a comparative novelty) and wrote the Grand Mistress' letters by hand. The latter would then be delivered to a specialized agency, the 'Alibi Office', which enabled its clients to have their letters posted from various locations in the world. She probably also impersonated the Grand Mistress on the one or two occasions that Taxil found this necessary (although some suspected that he had hired a *demimondaine* to play the part); if so, she is probably also the woman who posed for the photographs that Taxil put into circulation of his central character. If we are to believe Taxil, his typist grew to enjoy her part in the hoax ever more; 'corresponding with bishops and cardinals, receiving letters from the Pope's private secretary, telling them tales too strange to be true, informing the Vatican of the black conspiracies of the Luciferians: all this brought her into a mood of inexpressible cheerfulness'.[1280] These sparse facts are about all we know about the real Diana Vaughan.[1281]

Even more questions surround a third accomplice who later joined the Taxil team, the Italian 'Souvereign General Grand Inspector' Domenico Margiotta. Margiotta had been featured in an engraving in *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle* and had received a short mention in the text of this

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[1276] Cf. Taxil in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 168-171.

[1277] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 184-185.

[1278] Taxil in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 173-174. In Scott's *Rob Roy*, a certain Diana Vernon is featured, whose father's name is Vaughan, as the Parisian daily *Le Matin* pointed out in an article on 'Miss Diana Vaughan' that was published 23 November 1896.

[1279] Cf. Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 202.

[1280] Taxil in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 173.

[1281] I am unconvinced by the rather fantastical suggestion that Vaughan was in reality a mentally deranged American woman who had fled her mental asylum and was (somehow) exploited by Taxil & co to impersonate a Palladist Grand Mistress, an idea put forward by Waite and seemingly not judged implausible by Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 197-199, 202.

work as the founder of a Lodge in Florence, but this had probably not been done with any special purpose.[1282] Rather, it seems that the Italian gentleman with the flossy beard had come out of his own accord as an informer on Palladism, reporting himself as such to Bishop Fava in Grenoble. Although he may have been a freemason, he certainly had not been in possession of all the ranks and titles he mentioned in his first book; his main occupation seems to have been that of an adventurer, with some occasional ventures into literature on the side; and even wilder assumptions about his real profession have been made, as we shall see in a later section.[1283] How he was harnessed into Taxil's schemes is not altogether clear. Taxil would later claim that Margiotta had initially considered Palladism to be true and had been effectively blackmailed into cooperation out of shame over his naivety. Margiotta, who blew the whistle on Palladism shortly before Taxil did so himself, simply spoke of a 'barbarous contract' that bound him to Taxil. Whatever the truth in this, Taxil made effective use of the Italian, both as a third voice for his revelations about Diana Vaughan and as an 'inside expert' on Italian Masonry. Letters from him that Margiotta showed to a Catholic journalist in December 1896 show how Taxil dictated the Italian adventurer's themes, revised his proofs, and told him which members of the Press to approach and with what material.[1284] This accounts for the strange circumstance that Margiotta's books were first published in French and only then translated into Italian; and also for the perfect pace they keep with the disclosures in Taxil's other publications.[1285]

Taxil's most essential contributors, however, were mostly sincere in their convictions and entirely unaware of the role they played in his scheme. These were the Catholic publicists, journalists, and antimasonic activists that adopted his fabrications. The Palladium would have died an early and silent death had it not been enthusiastically maintained by large sections of the Catholic media, especially in France itself. A few key figures played a central role in the acceptance of Taxil's Luciferian inventions. In Grenoble, Bischop Fava, appropriately nicknamed 'The Scourge of Freemasonry', propagated the Taxilian premises on Freemasonry from beginning to end. *Le Franc-Maçonnerie demasqué*, the journal founded by Fava, followed suit, and its editor, Gabriel Bessonies, would prove to be one of Diana Vaughan and Taxil's most tenacious apologists. Important in this respect was also Abel Clarin de la Rive, a journalist who, for rather mysterious reasons, enjoyed great prestige as a learned and unimpeachable expert on Freemasonry in Catholic circles. His adoption of Taxil's stories on sexual rites, devil worship, and Palladism in his extensively footnoted work *La Femme et l'Enfant dans la Franc-Maçonnerie* ('Woman and Child in Freemasonry'), greatly contributed to the acceptance of these notions among more serious Catholic authors dealing with Freemasonry.[1286] Bishop Meurin, as we have seen before, also lent his assistance to the mystifications of Taxil: the false convert was consulted several times by the bishop while preparing his book *La Franc-Maçonnerie, Synagogue de Satan*. In his wake followed J.-K.

[1282] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle*, 1:450; the engraving can be found on 1:433.
[1283] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 179(n).
[1284] See the article by one Alphonse Lorain, 'L'Entreprise Diana Vaughan', published in *La France Libre*, December 1896 (I consulted this article as a newspaper clipping by Huysmans kept in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, cf. BnF, Fonds Lambert, 31/78-79: the exact date on the clipping was unfortunately unreadable).
[1285] Margiotta's *Souvenirs d'un Trente-Troisième* was translated into Italian as *Ricordi di un trentratré: Il Capo della Massoneria Universale* (Paris: Delhomme & Briguet, 1895); cf. p 181 of the French edition. In *Adriano Lemmi*, xv, Margiotta gives some information on his itinerary during his conversion; on pp. xiii-xv of the same book, a letter is printed in which he urges Diana Vaughan to convert as well. In a letter to Bessonies of 23 April 1895, Taxil declares that he has abandoned his work on a 'volume sur le Palladisme' out of exasparation with the doubts thrown upon his integrity by certain Catholic journalists and authors, although the first two chapters were already finished; he repeats this statement in a letter to Bessonies dated 27 April 1895 (Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 49-50, 54). Coincidentally, Margiotta's Palladism book appeared the same year.
[1286] Rive, *La Femme et l'Enfant dans la franc-maçonnerie*, esp. 109-141, 566-569, 610-654, 703-721.

Huysmans, whom the popular press was eager to style an 'expert on Satanism' following the publication of *Là-Bas*. The novelist devoted several pages to the Palladium in his preface to *La Satanisme et la magie* by Jules Bois, quoting extensively from Vaughan's *Palladium régénéré et libre*, and once again lashing out at the judicial authorities who neglected the criminal investigation of these sacrilegious activities.[1287] Taxil was wont to send his books to bishops and other ecclesiastical dignitaries, subsequently citing their letters of appreciation or recommendation on the opening pages of his works.

Support from experts and ecclesiastics like these paved the way for the acceptance of Taxil's stories in parochial journals and the Catholic mass press. Thus the *Revue Bénédictine* from Maredsous lauded Bataille's ludicrous *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, remarking that the gravures sometimes displayed 'an unsettling fantasy' and that its author was clearly 'a man of imagination', but chiefly deploring the fact that the two volumes were not brought out in a cheap edition for the general populace: 'That would be a work of apostolate'.[1288] The Assumptionist daily *Le Croix*, the *Revue Catholique de Coutances* of L.-M. Mustel, the Quebecois newspaper *La Vérité* of J.P. Tardivel, all reported extensively and unsceptically on Palladism and Diana Vaughan. Taxil made grateful use of these channels for propagation. Under his own name, or under those of Bataille, Vaughan, and Margiotta, he fed them with interesting news items and proofs of upcoming publications; the newspaper articles that would result from this he then quoted in his subsequent publications, thereby creating a deceivingly realistic tissue of seemingly reliable references, and a carefully built-up illusion that his own inventions were in fact independent discoveries by a vigilant Catholic press.

The gullibility of Catholic opinion should not be exaggerated. Taxil's inventions were by no means universally accepted by all of Catholicity. In Germany, the Jesuit Hermann Gruber of the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, an antimasonic author of some renown, turned sceptical after initially believing Taxil, and started to publish articles that meticulously demolished Taxil's creations. He seems to have had the support of the bishop of Cologne.[1289] Even in France, important sections of Catholic publicity did not take the Palladic bait. The ultraconservative *L'Univers* mostly ignored Taxil's fabrications, and in the even more conservative *La Vérité*, Georges Bois heaped scorn upon Taxil and his inventions, despite the fact that both he and his journal were militantly antimasonic.[1290] What is most striking in retrospect, nevertheless, is the improbable amount of credibility that Taxil was able to muster for his wild inventions among the Catholic public. These inventions included wondrous feats like voyages to other planets, visits to the Garden of Eden, children engendered by (or with) demons, the capturing of the tail of the Lion of Marcus by demonic hosts, the birth of the grandmother of the Antechrist in Jerusalem, Luciferians passing through walls, and Satan giving regular

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[1287] Huysmans in Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, xv-xviii. 'Ce qui est plus confondant c'est que le parti luciférien fait une revue de propagande, le Palladium,' Huysmans wrote to Dom Besse on 5 June 1895, 'C'est un tableau de blasphèmes – c'est surtout d'une incommensurable bêtise. Ça n'a, du reste, aucun succès et personne ne s'en occupe. Diana Vaughan, qui la dirige, va fonder une chapelle luciférienne dans notre quartier, mais elle n'obtiendra pas plus de succès.' See Joseph Daoust, *Les débuts bénédictins de J.-K. Huysmans: Documents inédits receuillis avec le concours de dom J. Laporte et de dom J. Mazé, Moines de Saint-Wandrille* (Abbaye Saint Wandrille: Éditions de Fontenelle, 1950), 91.

[1288] G., 'Littérature anti-maçonnique,' *Revue Bénédictine* 13 (February 1896) 2:78-84, 81.

[1289] This is suggested by the fact that the bishop's representative at Trent was among Taxil's most vocal critics, adopting Gruber's misgivings: Union Antimaçonnique Universelle, *Actes du I^re Congrès antimaçonnique international*, 2:94-96; Jones, 'Palladism and the Papacy,' 470.

[1290] Bois called *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle* 'a bad novel', and ridiculed Bataille's revelations about the preparation of biological and chemical weapons by Freemasonry in secret ateliers in (or underneath) Gibraltar. 'He adds that the Freemasons have not generally employed these weapons of destruction yet,' Bois wrote dryly on 19 June 1893, 'This observation is apt.' (quoted in Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 221-222) *La Vérité*'s programme expressly mentioned as one of its objectives 'combating the enterprises of the sects' threatening the Church.

conferences at the 'Sanctum Regnum' in Charleston in the guise of an attractive young man. Sometimes one can almost sense the pleasure that Taxil and his team must have had in pushing the boundaries of credibility just a bit farther; for example, in the delightful story of a spiritist séance during which Moloch suddenly appeared in the shape of a winged crocodile, drank all the liquors on the table, and disappeared again without inflicting further harm because he was not 'in one of his cruel days', after having played a short tune on the piano 'in the most strange notes' (a prophetic preminiscence, maybe, of the atonal music Schönberg would invent five years later).[1291]

Taxil's most successful invention was without doubt Diana Vaughan. Reading their utterances with regard to this young lady, it seems that many Catholic publicists were positively in love with this 'angelic creature living in an inferno of Palladism by the hazard of birth' (as Taxil aptly put it).[1292] For the twenty-first century reader, it is hard to believe that somebody like, say, Abel de la Rive was not actually in league with Taxil and his consorts when he burst out in laudatives for Miss Vaughan towards the end of his book. Exclaiming how much 'this strange personality is above the other members of Palladism and the two million seven hundred fifty-five thousand five hundred fifty-six Sisters Masons in the rest of the world', Rive quotes a prayer from Corneille's play *Polyeucte*, where the hero asks the divinity to convert the beautiful pagan girl Pauline with whom he is in love: 'She has too many virtues not to be a Christian'.[1293] After Miss Vaughan's 'conversion', this phenomenon only seemed to increase. Her publisher Pierret reported receiving 6,000 letters for the former Luciferian Grand Mistress after she announced her religious shift; the already quoted *Revue Bénédictine* expressed its admiration of the divine mercy that displayed itself in this wondrous occurrence.[1294] Cardinal Parocchi, Vicar of Leo XIII, sent Vaughan a letter on 16 December 1896 to transmit 'a most special blessing' from His Holiness and tell her that she would not be forgotten in his prayers, especially at Mass. 'You have won my sympathy since a long time past,' the letter added, 'Your conversion is one of the most magnificent triumphs of grace that I know of.' [1295] Women were not immune to the seductive power of Taxil's fantasy either. The Carmelite nun Theresa de Lissieux corresponded with the converted Luciferian and wrote a little piece of theatre for her fellow-nuns in which Asmodeus, Lucifer, and Beelzebub grievously deplored the loss of Diana for their infernal cause. The future saint was greatly dismayed when it turned out the former Grand Mistress had never existed, and personally burned the letters she had received from her.[1296]

The Catholic eagerness to embrace Taxil's fantasies contrasts strongly with the attitude of the non-confessional press, who mostly took no notice of Palladism until the very end, or reported

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[1291] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:618-619: 'aux notes de plus étranges'.

[1292] Taxil in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 172.

[1293] Rive, *La Femme et l'Enfant dans franc-maçonnerie*, 712. The prayer is from Act IV, Scene III of Paul Corneille's *Polyeucte*, lines 1267-1272:

'Seigneur, de vos bontés il faut que je l'obtienne:
Elle a trop de vertus pour n'être pas chrétienne;
Avec trop de mérite il vous plut la former
Pour ne vous pas connaître et ne pas vous aimer,
Pour vivre des enfers esclave infortunée
Et sus leur triste joug mourir comme elle est née!'.

[1294] Pierret in *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste* 23, 720; G., 'Littérature anti-maçonnique II,' *Revue Bénédictine* 13 (April 1896) 4:178-182, 182.

[1295] Taxil in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 179, 180.

[1296] The play, entitled 'Le Triomphe de l'Humilité', can be found in Sainte Thérèse de L'Enfant-Jésus et de la Sainte-Face, *Œuvres complètes (Textes et derniers paroles)* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf/Desclée De Brouwer, 2004), 915-927; cf. also Marianne Closson, 'Le *Diable au XIXe Siècle* de Léo Taxil, ou les 'mille et une nuits' de la démonologie,' in *Fictions du Diable*, 313-332, there 322(n), as well as Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 203.

on it with studied amusement.[1297] In general, the spokesmen and -women of fin de siècle occultism and esotericism showed more critical acumen as well, although some did not manage to avoid stumbling in Taxil's trap. With an official journal called *Lucifer*, the Theosophists were obliged to react to Taxil's allegations sooner or later. In January 1896, George Robert Stowe Mead, the influential personal secretary of the late Blavatsky, commented on the Palladism revelations in an editorial in *Lucifer*, stating that Theosophy's Lucifer had nothing to do with that of Palladism or Satanism, being a benign spiritual being helping mankind in its intellectual evolution. He did not, however, seem to doubt the existence of a large organisation of Lucifer-worshipping Freemasons, and expressed the presumption that this apparant vogue of Satanism might be caused by a sudden mass reincarnation of souls that had debauched themselves in orgies during the final decades of the Roman Empire.[1298] In the spiritist periodical *Light* ('A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research'), excerpts from *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle* started to appear in English translation from the fall of 1895. The translator (who hid behind the initials C. C. M.) declared that he deplored Bataille's 'violent prejudice against this country, a prejudice which he indulges by statements, not less shameful because ridiculously false', but asserted that the publications should nevertheless not be neglected by students of occultism. 'From several quarters, of late years, there have been rumours, becoming more and more assured and definite, of the actual existence and spread of the 'Luciferian' cult, of its connection with the highest degrees of Masonry, and practical influence in political and revolutionary organisations. Perhaps the obvious and inevitable re-action from materialism is to the nature-worship (the 'natural divinity') in which the spiritual is reinstated as the consecration of sensuous spontaneity.'[1299] In the following issues of the journal, a lively controversy over the new divulgations ensued. One correspondent discerned dark astral forces behind the writings of Bataille, 'who is probably an active member of the 'Black' party, *as they call themselves*, those intransigents who have but one object in view, the reestablishment of the temporal power founded on the basis of Fear and Awe, instead of Love and Mercy'; a female letter writer saw the recrudescence of Satanism as a typical example of the eschatological battle between evil and good of 'these days of the Kali Jug' ('doubtless the old Hussite password, 'May he who is wronged salute thee,' is not abrogated.'); a third contributor, who presented himself as 'Past Master and Holy Arch-Mason', ventured that the whole thing was a plot of 'Popish Priests and Jesuits', and expressed his conviction that Diana Vaughan was 'under the hypnotic power' of Dr. Hacks 'or possibly some wily member of the Order of Jesus.'[1300] Even after Papus had been asked for his expert opinion and two reactions of the French occultist had been published, the debate continued to flare up. In France, Jules Bois displayed slightly more scepticism in his treatment of the Palladic revelations. The journalist-cum-esotericist

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[1297] On 13 April 1895, for instance, a journalist called Émile Dehau wrote in the local newspaper *Charente* with regard to the public emergence of the New and Reformed Palladium: 'Pour nous, nous n'avons pas à intervenir dans ces querelles mystiques dont la science aura raison tôt ou tard. L'État laïque n'a pas davantage à proscrire, comme certains le demandent, un culte nouveau si ses adhérents respectent les lois de la société.' Émile Dehau, 'Le culte de Lucifer,' *Charente* (13 April 1895), consulted by me in BnF, Fonds Lambert, 26//24.

[1298] Quoted in Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente,* 225-226.

[1299] C. C. M., 'Luciferian Palladism: Illustrated by the Story of Romance of a Remarkable Convert from it,' *Light: A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research* 15 (14 September 1895) 766:435-439; both quotes derive from page 429. In subsequent articles, 'C. C. M.' supplied more translated excerpts: see 'Two Luciferian Seances,' *Light* 15 (28 September 1895) 768:470-471; 'More Luciferian Phenomena: Levitation Extraordinary,' ibidem 15 (12 October 1895) 770:495-496; 'More Luciferian Phenomena: The Evocation of the Living,' ibidem 15 (26 October 1895) 772:515-517.

[1300] 'Hesperus', 'The Case of Miss Vaughan,' *Light* 15 (5 October 1895) 769:482-483; Isabel de Steiger, F.T.S., 'Luciferianism,' ibidem 15 (2 November 1895) 773:535; Africanus Theosophus, 'Le Diable au XIXe Siecle,' ibidem 15 (26 October 1895) 772:522, and 'Luciferians and Freemasonry,' ibidem 15 (16 November 1895) 775:557-58.

interviewed Hacks/Bataille for *Figaro* and devoted a short chapter to 'The Luciferians' in his *Petits Religions de Paris*, where he voiced the suspicion that the whole thing might very well turn out to be 'the dream of a will-o'-the-wisp'. But true or false, the whole story was surely a sign of the times. 'Certainly it takes all the fatigues of our century to imagine or re-establish such a cult of the fallen Archangel.'[1301]

Those with real inside knowledge of the world of alternative religion and esoteric societies, however, made short shrift of the Taxilian charade. Guaita, who had predictably been portrayed in *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle* as a practising Satanist with a familiar spirit hiding in a cupboard, declared once more that devil worship was an extremely uncommon phenomenon.[1302] Papus (whom Bataille had declared to be possessed by the demon that had furnished his pseudonym) reacted with another brochure, in which he pointed out how liberally Bataille and consorts had stolen from the works of Éliphas Lévi.[1303] One of his fellow occultists did what the complete Catholic press apparently failed to do: he took a coach to the Parisian address of the publisher of *Le Palladium régénéré et libre*, where he found not a shop painted red and sprinkled with diabolical symbols, but a perfectly Catholic establishment where the Luciferian journal was on display in the rather uneasy company of rosaries and Catholic books of devotion.[1304] Across the Channel, the English Freemason and follower of Lévi, Arthur Edward Waite, also took up the defence of his late spiritual mentor and published a sharp-witted and critical overview of the Palladism literature that left no doubt about the utter nonsense of it all.[1305] It must be noted, however, that neither occultist seems to have grasped the full extent of the deception right away. In his earlier contributions to the debate in *Light*, Waite was not altogether dismissive of some of the disinformation that had been produced by the Taxil factory; and although Papus, in his letters to the same periodical, denounced *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle* as a 'financial speculation' by its Catholic publishers, he added, surprisingly enough, that Hacks had had inside knowledge about Palladism nevertheless: 'It is true that Dr. Hacke [sic] was a member of an almost unknown Italian lodge, and that he was invited to assist at a Palladic *initiation*, which included no occult ceremonials, and this was at a small lodge of no importance, now extinct (and who really held the cultus of Lucifer, star of the morning, not the spirit of darkness as represented).'[1306] With regard to Diana Vaughan, he declared that neither he, nor any of the 'about one hundred and fifty' leaders or officers of initiated groups in France with whom he was familiar had ever seen her – but she might have frequented 'atheistic Masonic lodges', where most of the members of the Palladium were assumed to be located as well.[1307]

Meanwhile, Taxil did not altogether hide his own person from view. He toured the country to give conferences accompanied with oxhydric slides, the latest in visual technology.[1308] With Doctor Bataille, Diana Vaughan, and Margiotta, he was an important contributor to the *Revue mensuelle religieuse, politique, scientifique*, a journal that accompanied and succeeded the

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[1301] Bois, *Petites Religions de Paris*, 155-164, here 164, 163.
[1302] Quoted in Gerber, *Betrug als Ende eines Betruges*, 81.
[1303] Papus, *Le Diable et l'Occultisme* (Paris: Chamuel, 1895), 9-10, 13-23.
[1304] Papus, *Catholicisme, satanisme et occultisme* (Paris: Chamuel, 1897), 24, 30.
[1305] Waite, *Devil-Worship in France*; pp. 294-298 in particularly defends Lévi against 'diabolising' interpretations of his work.
[1306] For Waite, see *Light: A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research* 15 (7 December 1895) 778:593-594 and 16 (28 March 1896) 794:152-153. Papus was paraphrased in Q. V., 'Le Diable au XIXme Siecle: An Interview with 'Papus',' *Light* 16 (7 March 1896) 791:112-113. Waite referred to this interview with Papus when he mentioned the existence of 'a society which was devoted to the cultus of Lucifer, star of the morning, quite distinct from Masonry, quite unimportant, and since very naturally dead'; *Devil-Worship in France*, 291.
[1307] Q. V., 'Le Diable au XIXme Siecle,' *Light* 16 (16 May 1896) 801:231-232, there 231.
[1308] Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 45.

feuilletons of *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*. Merchandise opportunities were apparently not neglected either. If we are to believe Papus, a medical and dental practice was annexed to the Taxilian publishing establishment, 'with special reduction for gentlemen from the clergy'.[1309]
The most bizarre of Taxil's Catholic projects was probably the foundation of an antimasonic lay order, the 'Antimasonic Labarum'. This 'Militant Catholic Order' declared itself inspired by Pope Leo XIII, in whose footsteps it was to follow in undertaking 'a war without quarter, defensive and offensive, against the infernal sect, which it will not cease till the day of the final triumph of Religion, that is to say: till the day of the establishment of the kingdom of Jesus Christ over society, and his recognition as King of France by the public authorities'.[1310]
Taxil had found a remarkable collaborator for this remarkable venture. This was Jules Doinel (1842-1903), who had cooperated intimately with Papus, Guaita, and Péladan, and had been founder and first 'Archont' of the Gnostic Church, an esoteric group that sought to resurrect Catharism. In 1895, Doinel had suddenly converted to Catholicism and published a book entitled *Satan démasqué* ('Satan Unmasked'), in which he pointed out the hand of Lucifer behind all forms of esotericism and occultism, supporting his thesis with his personal experiences in Masonic and esoteric groups.[1311] (These amounted mainly to 'psychic manifestations' of the Prince of Evil he had sensed during meetings and rituals.) Although Doinel seems to have reverted to Gnosticism later in life, his conversion was probably sincere. On 19 November 1895, after Mass, he convened with Taxil and six other militants in the Paris Sacre Cœur to found the Antimasonic Labarum, Doinel taking on the 'religious' name of Br$^+$ [sic] Kostka de Borgia (reminiscent of Jean Kostka, the pseudonym he had used in publishing *Satan Unmasked*), and Taxil that of Br$^+$ Paul de Règis (after a distant relative noted for his piety).[1312]
The new order was an audacious endeavour to establish a Catholic parallel for Freemasonry, with its own colourful uniforms and sashes, its own banners and rituals, and its own system of degrees: one for women (that of 'Sister of Joan of Arc') and three for men (Legionnaire of Constantine, Soldier of Saint Michael, and Knight of the Sacred Heart). The Labarum also had a youth organisation, its own journal (*L'Anti-Maçon, Revue spéciale du mouvement anti-maçonnique, organe officiel de la ligue du Labarum*), and a nationwide web of subdivisions that assembled from time to time to parade in ceremonial apparel. Men and women of the highest degree could offer their life to Christ in voluntary sacrifice to perform expiatory penance for the sacrileges committed by Freemasonry. The movement seems to have obtained some measure of success. In 1896, 11 'companies' were already in the process of formation in various places all over France, with foreign units operating in Canada and Scotland. Hundreds flocked to the annual 'Grand' Garde' of the Paris division on 22 February 1896.[1313]

The zenith and at the same time turning point of Taxil's career as a Roman Catholic Antimasonist may well have been the International Antimasonic Congress of 1896. The idea of organising this congress had not been Taxil's, but he had been closely involved in the initial stages of its preparation, and his creations and personality were at the centre of interest during its proceedings. During the opening procession, Taxil made his entrance as a

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[1309] Papus, *Le Diable et l'Occultisme*, 12.
[1310] *Le Labarum anti-maçonnique: Statuts de l'ordre, déclaration de principes et grandes constitutions, cérémonial des grand'gardes, extraits du rituel des chevaliers du Sacré-Cœur* (Paris: Librairie Antimaçonnique, [1895]) 5.
[1311] Jean Kostka, *Lucifer démasqué* (Paris: Delhomme & Briguet, [1895]).
[1312] So Taxil said himself; but he may also have been inspired by the address of his offices with the Catholic publishing company Téqui, which was located on rue Régis, 6, Paris (Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 17).
[1313] Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 207-209. In-depth research on the Labarum, as well as on the official Roman Catholic reaction to this organisation, remains a great scholarly desideratum.

conquering hero, decked out with the red sash and ritual regalia of Honorary Grand Master of the Labarum and surrounded by his self-created antimasonic knighthood carrying banners and standards. He frequently made confession and took communion. At official religious ceremonies, he invariably entered the church when it was already filled; and as he slowly walked down the aisle with an air of utmost humility, churchgoers broke out in spontaneous approval, shouting 'Long live the great Convert!' and 'Un santo, un santo!'[1314] His interjections on behalf of Diana Vaughan during the congress earned him rounds of frenetic applause. Regarding the popular esteem in which he was held, Trent certainly was a triumph for Taxil. Yet in a 'political' respect, it could be considered a failure. Prior to the congress, he had sought to get himself appointed as official representative of the French antimasonists at the conference; but word had arrived from the Italian organisational committee that his nomination would not be accepted.[1315] At Trent itself, Taxil tried, in rather devious ways, to get himself elected into the commission that would be charged with drawing up the statutes of the nascent International Antimasonic Union. In this way he would place himself right at the heart of the emerging global antimasonic movement. In the nick of time, however, his election was prevented by whispered instructions from a prominent member of the board.[1316] Taxil's evasiveness in furnishing proof of Diana Vaughan's existence, moreover, could not possibly have left a favourable impression with the hierarchy. In order to protect the safety of Miss Vaughan, Taxil had claimed, he could only give the name of her confessor and other proofs of her conversion in a private *tête à tête* with a bishop, who could then transmit it to the Pope. However, Taxil failed to appear at the arranged meeting with Bishop Lazzareschi. When the bishop and he met later that evening, he assured the bishop that even the slightest revelation could endanger the converted Grand Mistress, and drew a revolver from his pocket in front of the ecclesiastical dignitary, remarking that he never went out without a weapon because he was continually in danger.[1317]

Evidently, suspicions had been raised about Taxil in high places. Even before the Antimasonic Congress, in fact, cracks had started to appear in his Palladic edifice. As early as 22 April 1894, Rosen had denounced Taxil in an article entitled 'The key of the mystification', mainly by consulting a Masonic Encyclopaedia to show that most of Bataille's soi-disant confidents were already dead.[1318] In January 1896, while touring Roman Catholic institutes in the Netherlands, he had once again declared Taxil to be a fraud; Diana Vaughan was a mere fabrication, he maintained, impersonated by Taxil's wife. Taxil had effectively shut the mouth of his competitor by spreading the rumour that Rosen was a secret agent of the Adriano Lemmi under the code name Moses Lid-Nazareth.[1319] But he was not able to keep the

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[1314] Gerber, *Betrug als Ende eines Betruges*, 33-34. Gruber here cites from the (liberal) Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* (22 & 23 April 1897), but does not deny the picture this periodical paints, only remarking that 'un santo' in Italian does not have the same significance as 'ein Heiliger' in German.

[1315] Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 214. In a letter to Father Octave, Vice-President of the Union Anti-Maçonnique de France, a member of the French Committee for the organization of the International Antimasonic Congress, Taxil enumerated the reasons given by Rome for this refusal; '1° personnellement je ne suis pas capable de coopérer à une œuvre sérieuse, et 2° je vis avec une femme (c'est-à-dire une concubine) d'une profonde impiété qui continue à tenir commerce de mes anciens ouvrages anti-cléricaux.' Taxil also told that rumors were circulated that his wife was actually a Palladist who celebrated black Masses (quoted in Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 84-86.

[1316] Union Antimaçonnique Universelle, *Actes du I^re^ Congrès antimaçonnique international*, 2:92-94.

[1317] Letter from Monseigneur A. Villard, Secretary of Cardinal Parocchi, to Diana Vaughan, 7 January 1897; Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 374: 'Voyez, je ne sors jamais sans cela, car je suis toujours en danger.'

[1318] Cf. Papus, *Catholicisme, satanisme et occultisme*, 24, who refers to this article as 'La clef de la mystification,' *Gazette du High Life*, 22 April 1894. Rive, *La Femme et l'Enfant dans la franc-maçonnerie*, 566-569, cites a letter from Rosen published in the Masonic periodical *La Chaîne d'Union*, novembre 1887 (sic!), 465-467, entitled 'A propos du livre 'Les Sœurs Maçonnes' par Léo Taxil,' which makes the same point.

[1319] *Diana Vaughan: Haar persoon, haar werk en haar aanstaande komst*, 5-7.

lid on the box forever. The Parisian newspaper *L'Éclair* divulged the existence of the Alibi Office at Passage de l'Opera 29 in December 1896, and advised Taxil to confess his imposture 'in a peal of laughter'.[1320] The cracks in his construction became chasms when Taxil's own contributors started to defect. Karl Hacks, alias Doctor Bataille, more or less opened the books to an English journalist shortly before the Antimasonic Congress; in November 1896, he gave an interview to *L'Univers* and wrote letters to *La Vérité*, the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, and *La Libre Parole* in which he disclosed the real story behind *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*.[1321] 'One can permit oneself everything with those Catholics; they are nothing but imbeciles!' a shocked journalist from *La Vérité* recorded from his mouth.[1322] In December 1896, Margiotta also threw off his mask and told *La Libre Parole* how he had been dancing to Taxil's strings. He also maintained, although certainly incorrectly, that Diana Vaughan was in reality Taxil's wife.

It was clear that the tenability of Taxil's grand hoax was nearing its end. Taxil himself also appeared to be creaking under the strain of continuous masquerade by now. He was signalled by an anonymous source in a Parisian cabaret, dead drunk, loudly singing anticlerical songs that he had written himself during his anticlerical career, and proudly boasting of the fact.[1323] In his speech on 19 April, Taxil once again tried to create the impression that his final self-exposure had been contrived long before, purposely terminating an activity of almost exactly twelve years as a self-appointed undercover agent. He even claimed that Hacks's defection had occurred in close accord with himself, with the intention of drawing the attention of the 'grande presse' to the Vaughan story.[1324] In the intricate web of fabrications that Taxil wove, it is at times all but impossible to ascertain the truth of some of his claims, but a number of circumstances indicate that he might not have been merely venting wind in this particular case: for instance, Hacks's seemingly deliberate vagueness about Diana Vaughan's actual existence and true identity. Planned or not, the end of his charade could not be postponed much longer if it was not to be ended by others, as Taxil acknowledged with as many words in his final discourse.[1325]

The 19 April press conference formed a fitting finale to Taxil's almost unbelievable feat of infiltration and sabotage. Notwithstanding the fact that he certainly had not neglected his own material interests, Taxil had in some sense indeed sacrificed himself for his cause, spending twelve years of his life living in his own bizarre experiment, and effectively eliminating, as he noted himself, his chances of any further public career. No newspaper whatsoever, whether Icelandic or Patagonian, would henceforth accept a news story from his hands.[1326] Taxil's remaining years would be spent in reissuing his old anticlerical publications and publishing pornography and cooking books. He died in 1907, virtually forgotten.[1327]

the Great Masonic Conspiracy[1328]

[1320] 'Diana Vaughan,' *L'Éclair*, 10 December 1896.
[1321] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 184-185.
[1322] Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 229.
[1323] M. Casis, 'M. Taxil chez Chopinette,' *La Verité* (15 april 1897): 2.
[1324] Taxil in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 183.
[1325] Taxil, in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 182. Introvigne, following Waite, suggests that Taxil would *never* have disclosed his mystification if circumstances had not forced him to do so (*Enquête sur le satanisme*, 204-205). My estimation is otherwise, given the increasing pressure he was facing from the (Roman Catholic) press and the Vatican; but there is no way, of course, to determine what really could or would have happened in a different situation.
[1326] Taxil, in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 159.
[1327] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 189; Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 219-220. Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 219-220, mentions that Taxil started a feuilleton on his adventures in Catholicism after 19 April 1897, and returned to the affair in many of the prefaces he wrote for reissues of his old anticlerical works; these texts seem to have remained relatively unexplored by modern historiography.

It is not hard to allocate the Taxil saga a place in the history of Satanism. Palladism is a crystal clear case of attribution; a case of attribution made extraordinary because it had been consciously invented from the beginning, with the explicit purpose of exposing the very mechanics of attribution itself. As noted above, all serious historians accept Taxil's statements about its wholly fictive nature. What is much more intriguing and difficult to explain is the tremendous success of Taxil's hoax among the contemporary Catholic public. How is it possible that his improbable inventions were believed by so many, up to the highest echelons of Roman Catholicism? For the Taxilian inventions found credence not only among pious parishioners in rural backwaters, but also among leaders of Catholic opinion of quite evident intellectual capacity.
For an answer, some historians have simply blamed the immense credulity nineteenth-century Roman Catholic believers seemed to possess.[1329] Yet this is at best half an explanation, and involves some questionable assumptions about Roman Catholic believers. Humanity's great willingness to be deceived is certainly a striking fact. But there were some historical circumstances that facilitated Taxil's endeavour, and without which we cannot understand why substantial parts of Europe's Catholic population eagerly embraced dark fictions about worldwide networks of devious Lucifer-worshippers.

To begin with: Taxil did not build on virginal grounds. A long tradition of antimasonic literature, predominantly stemming from within the orbits of conservative Christianity, provided the foundations on which his construction rested. There had been precedents for this long tradition in the eighteenth and even in the seventeenth century.[1330] But it was the Western Revolution, and especially its emblematic highpoint, the French Revolution, that gave the theme its enormous proliferation and its new political significance. The Revolution had been a thorough and totally unexpected shock for those who had deemed the old order indestructible. Suddenly (so it seemed) the people of France, eldest daughter of the Church, had deposed and eventually decapitated their divinely anointed king, had declared that they would rule themselves according to their own natural lights and without recourse to divinity, tradition, or precedent, and subsequently had proceeded to worship the Goddess of Reason instead of the

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[1328] On antimasonic literature in general, cf. Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein, *Die These von der Verschwörung 1776-1945. Philosophen, Freimaurer, Juden, Liberale und Sozialisten als Verschwörer gegen die Sozialordnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 1978), 20-188; Jérôme Rousse-Lacordaire, *Rome et les Franc-Maçons. Histoire d'un conflit* (Paris: Berg International Editeurs 1996), 1-110; Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 156-167; Wolfgang Wippermann, *Agenten des Bösen. Verschwörungstheorien von Luther bis heute* (Berlin-Brandenburg: be.bra verlag 2007), 47-57; and the various contributions to *Les courants antimaçonniques hier et aujourd'hui*, ed. Alain Dierkens, Problèmes d'histoire des religions 4 (Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles 1993) mentioned in subsequent footnotes. This chapter concentrates on antimasonism within Roman Catholicism, where the phenomenon became most virulent and most influential, and furthermore focuses especially on the situation in France and the role played by the Papacy. Protestantism had and has its own manifestations of antimasonism. In the United States, for instance, organised antimasonism particularly flourished in the 1820s and 1830s and briefly became a political factor of some importance: see on this Michel L. Brodsky, 'L'affaire Morgan et le parti antimaçonnique aux Etats-Unis (1826-1842),' in *Les courants antimaçonniques hier et aujourd'hui*, ed. Alain Dierkens. Problèmes d'histoire des religions 4 (Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles 1993), 25-37, and Lorman Ratner, *Anti-Masonry: The crusade and the Party* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969). For antimasonism in nineteenth-century Holland, see Anton van de Sande, 'Antimaçonisme bij katholieken en protestanten,' in *'Een stille leerschool van deugd en goede zeden': Vrijmetselarij in Nederland in de 18e en 19e eeuw*, ed. A. van de Sande and J. Roosendaal (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2005), 137-155.
[1329] Cf Émile Poulat in his preface to Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, ii; Jones, 'Palladism and the Papacy,' 456.
[1330] Jacques Lemaire, 'Les premières formes de l'antimaçonnisme en France: les ouvrages de révélation (1738-1751)', in *Les courants antimaçonniques hier et aujourd'hui*, ed. Alain Dierkens, Problèmes d'histoire des religions 4 (Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles 1993), 11-23.

god of Christianity, whose churches they had disowned and whose clergy they had persecuted with violence.[1331] And although the combined forces of the Old Order had eventually succeeded in crushing the French insurgence and restoring royal rule in France, the ghost of Revolution would not lie down and die. Instead, it engendered other ghosts in all parts of Europe. Liberalism, socialism, communism, and anarchism clamoured for radical change in wild succession. All shook their menacing fists at the Christian Church. Even where their revolutions failed, governments adopted measures that curbed religious influence on society and allowed the practice of other religions, while revolutionary tenets such as parliamentary control and universal suffrage were gradually becoming a political reality in many West European countries. At the same time, an increasing number of Europeans and Americans abandoned Christianity to adopt metaphysical notions that had formerly been the domain of a handful of infidel *philosophes*. The rule of man had indeed begun.

From the perspective of those that represented the 'outraged traditions', these changes were incomprehensible.[1332] They almost seemed to be part of an evil scheme. Already during the Revolution years itself, publications started to appear that proclaimed Freemasonry to be the secret motor behind the recent political turmoil.[1333] Was not the famous slogan 'Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité' an invention of Freemasonry? Had religious tolerance not been propagated for centuries in the secrecy of the Lodges? And could Freemasons not be found among the most prominent revolutionaries? In 1797, these rumours found their codification in the four-volume *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme* ('Memoirs for a History of Jacobinism') by father Augustin Barruel, a French priest who had fled to England when the Revolutionary regime had started its religious persecutions. The vast historical panorama painted by Barruel in his *Mémoires* would dominate the discourse on Freemasonry for the following century and longer. Evidently, Barruel maintained, the French Revolution had been the work of Freemasons, led on by their radical vanguard, the Illuminati. But this event was only the most recent and most dramatic eruption of a long campaign against 'the crucified God and the crowned kings'.[1334] On the eve of the Revolution, the Lodge had banded together with the 'Conspiracy of the Philosophers' to attack the Christian Church and the god-given social order. Its precursor had been the Templar Order, as some Freemasons claimed themselves, a military religious order that had been disbanded on accusations of heresy and conspiracy against the King of France. The Templar heresy, in its turn, stemmed from the Albigensi and the other heretic 'sects of the South', which, eventually, were all offshoots from Catharism. 'Everything is connected,' Barruel wrote, 'From the Cathars to the Albigenzi, on to the Templars, & from them on to the Jacobin Masons; everything indicates a common father.' This common father, the Catholic author went on, was Manicheism, the heresy that had already been scourged by the Fathers of the Church.[1335] What had seemed thoroughly modern was in fact the latest upsurge of an age-old conspiracy that had consistently pursued its anti-Christian and anti-authoritarian objectives since the early days of Christianity. 'It is

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[1331] Cf. Cholvy, *La religion en France*, 7-20.

[1332] 'Outraged traditions' was the term employed by the British politician Benjamin Disreali (1804-1881) to denote the surge of reactionary political forces in post-revolutionary Europe. (See his *Lord George Bentinck: A Political Biography* (London: Colburn, 1852), 555: 'A dynasty may be subverted, but it leaves as its successor a family of princely pretenders; a confiscated aristocracy takes the shape of factions; a plundered church acts on the tender consciences of toiling millions; corporate bodies displaced from their ancient authority no longer contribute their necessary and customary quota to the means of government; outraged traditions in multiplied forms enfeebles or excruciates the reformed commonwealth.')

[1333] Rousse-Lacordaire, *Rome et les Franc-Maçons*, 91.

[1334] Augustin Barruel, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme*, 4 vols. (London: Ph. Le Boussonnier, 1797), 2:418.

[1335] Barruel, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme*, 2:397, 2 :403.

always royalty & Christianity that has to be destroyed, Empires and Altars that have to be reversed, to establish *equality & liberty* for the human race.'[1336]
Barruel's book became a classic in its genre, was translated into virtually every European language, and set the pattern for the rich antimasonic literature that bloomed in the decades that followed.[1337] Its popularity was probably due in large part to the fact that it made comprehensible what was otherwise incomprehensible. Now the unprecedented events of 1789 and the seemingly spontaneous defection of many Europeans from a faith that was so evidently true could be given a place in the historical framework of what had come before. Now it was clear that nothing new had happened in the first place. The Revolution had simply been the latest upsurge of the enemies of the Church that had reared their heads under a different disguise in every epoch; there had been nothing spontaneous in it: the Revolutionaries had been inspired and prompted by organisers operating in a secret antichristian network that dated back to Antiquity. This network was not vaguely invisible, but tangibly present in virtually every town and city; and although Barruel held the rank-and-file of Freemasonry to be ignorant of the sect's dark devices, and its Anglo-Saxon branches completely exempt, it was in the secret recesses of the Lodge that the plot against the Christian faith and Christian society was hatched.[1338] This refreshingly simple explanation found wide acceptance, and not just among hillbillies or bigots. Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821), the sharp-witted Roman Catholic intellectual who had been active in fringe esotericism himself, initially wrote a refutation of Barruel's thesis, but later 'converted' to Barruelism.[1339] And, bizarrely, the Comte Ferdinand de Bertier (1782-1864), impressed by Barruel, allowed himself to be initiated in Loge de la Parfaite Estime in order to bring to light its occult machinations, subsequently founding the Chevaliers de la Foi ('Knights of the Faith') to conduct a clandestine counteraction against the dark workings of Freemasonry.[1340]

No-one who skims through a bibliography of antimasonic literature can fail to notice that many of its authors were Catholic or Protestant clergy, with Barruel himself a prominent example. This was no coincidence. In the dichotomy that the French Revolution had engendered, the Roman Catholic Church had, after some initial wavering, chosen the side of the forces of Reaction; important parts of protestant Christianity, especially in its more 'fundamentalist' manifestations, had joined in this antirevolutionary stance.[1341] Some aspects of the French Revolution – the disowning of church property, the persecution of priests who did not want to swear loyalty to the republic – made this understandable. The aversion called forth by these occurrences soon formed itself into an ideology. Barruel's work repeatedly attested to a notion that was rapidly becoming an article of faith for many anti-revolutionaries: that of the 'traditional' alliance between throne and altar. In fact, the absolute monarchs of the Ancien Régime had often been far from kind or protective to the church and its dignitaries. Yet in the common cause of 'outraged traditions' against the swelling tide of revolution, this

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[1336] Barruel, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme*, 2:413.
[1337] Bieberstein, *These von der Verschwörung*, 110. George Sand's *Consuelo* novels had been an attempt to reverse the ethical significance of Barruel's narrative; cf. the essay of L. Guicard, 'L'occultisme dans Consuelo et la Comtesse de Rudolstadt,' in Sand, *Consuelo*, 1:xlvii-lxxviii; esp. xxii.
[1338] Barruel, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme*, 2:266, 2:277-278. Barruel had briefly been an 'ignorant' Lodge member like this himself, as he tells on pp. 2:270-277.
[1339] Bieberstein, *These von der Verschwörung*, 135.
[1340] Rousse-Lacordaire, *Rome et les Franc-Maçons*, 84. Barrucand, 'Quelques aspects de l'antimaçonnisme,' 91, suggests the Chevalier de la Foi were not antimasonic; I have followed Rousse-Lacordaire.
[1341] As was to be expected because of its fragmentarised nature, protestantism proved more divided with regard to the French (and Western) Revolution. In France in particular, protestants would rank among the staunchest supporters of the Republican heritage, to which they owed their legal emancipation. This gave some logic to the anti-protestantism erupting in Taxil's pseudo-Catholic publications mentioned above. On the (political) position of Catholics in France, see Cholvy, *La religion en France*, 90-92.

part of recent history was swiftly forgotten. For much of the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church would strive to restore the 'Christian' monarchy and the official Christian character of the state, obstinately opposing the most important legal consequences of the Western Revolution, such as freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state.

By its very nature, the Papacy itself was the most striking embodiment of the alliance between throne and altar. The Pope was spiritual head of the most powerful church of Christianity: but he was also de facto monarchical ruler of the Papal States, a strip of territory that had been granted to the Roman Pope by the first of the Carolingians in the remote days of the Dark Ages. For both friend and foe, this strip of territory became the symbol of the claim of the Church to dominate both the spiritual and the secular sphere in a world that was entering into a phase of radical secularisation. Not surprisingly, its status would be a source of constant dispute in the aftermath of the French Revolution. In 1799, Rome had been 'liberated' by French Revolutionary troops; the city had been declared a Republic and the 'citoyen-pape' taken away in captivity. After Napoleonic France had been defeated, the European monarchs had restored the temporal rule of the Pope. But the spirit of revolt now threatened the Papacy from within the boundaries of its own territories, as Italian radicals clamoured for democratic and constitutional government and a united Italy. In 1848, when a new wave of revolutionary fervour spread over Europe, rebels led by the Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) captured Rome and re-established a republic; Pius IX had to flee the eternal city in the habit of an ordinary priest. Mazzini's republic proved short-lived, and Pius IX was once again restored to his throne, protected (ironically) by French troops sent by Napoleon III. Yet the Papal autocracy was now increasingly becoming an anomaly in the European political landscape. When the Franco-Prussian War broke out in 1870 and the French soldiers were withdrawn, the unified Italian state that had taken shape in the meantime reacted immediately. In September 1870, Italian troops marched into Rome. Pius IX commanded his soldiers to put up symbolic resistance to the invading force and then locked himself in the Papal palaces, henceforth spending his life as the 'prisoner of the Vatican'.

These experiences had formed the attitudes of the Popes and confirmed their suspicion of the new ideological winds that blew over Europe. In their own home base, they had radically rejected the overtures of modernity. In the 1820s, when most of Western Europe had groaned under the repression of Reaction, the Papal States had distinguished themselves by their ultra-reactionary regime. When the French had left in 1814, the Holy Inquisition had been restored immediately; Pope Leo XII, who was elected to the See of Peter in 1823, had stepped up the persecution of non-Catholic 'sects' (resulting in seven death penalties) and had found occasion to castigate the French monarch Louis XVIII for his tolerant religious laws that would 'permit everyone to think and believe as he thinks most fit'. He had even banned encores and ovations in theatres, as they might give occasion to vent political discontent.[1342] These excesses were somewhat mitigated under his successors, but the fundamental attitude of staunch antimodernism remained. In 1832, Leo's successor Gregorius XVI issued the encyclical *Mirari Vos*, in which he condemned every attempt to revolt against legitimate rulers and called the notion of freedom of conscience a 'delirium'.[1343] With Pius IX, the condemnation of modern tenets and ideologies accumulated into a veritable Syllable of Errors, solemnly proclaimed in December 1864 and condemning pantheism, rationalism, socialism, liberalism, and a host of other –isms.

[1342] Hauptmann, *P.-J. Proudhon, genèse d'un antithéiste*, 53-56; Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (s.l.: Yale University Press, 1997), 217.

[1343] Duffy, *Saints and Sinners*, 220-221.

Unsurprisingly, Freemasonry could and would not remain absent from these lists. The nineteenth-century Popes found precedent for this in their eighteenth-century predecessors. Already in 1738, Pope Clemens XII had condemned the new society of 'liberi Muratori seu Francs Massons' that had started to become something of a craze on continental Europe. Drawing on the favourite *topoi* of medieval and early modern heresology, the pope had declared that the secret proceedings of the Lodges must have been the scene of evil deeds, 'because if they would not do wrong, they would not hate the light so much'.[1344] His main allegation against Freemasonry, however, had been that the society promoted religious relativism because Masons of different religious affiliation could be admitted, and that they might foment revolt against their rightful Kings. Although hardly testifying to tolerance, and shrouded in the usual theology, the purport of his Bull was probably predominantly practical and local. In fact, Clemens seems merely to have followed other European rulers who had outlawed Freemasonry because they suspected it would undermine absolutist control over their subjects; the Pope's Bull itself referred to this fact. It was likewise unsuccessful, and although the Roman and Spanish Inquisitions apprehended and executed a few Masons, the various reprises of Clemens's condemnation of Masonry by his eighteenth-century successors mostly attest to its ineffectivity. Lodge membership of clergy had been quite common in the eighteenth century; in one instance, there had even been a monastery with its own Masonic Lodge.[1345]

A totally different atmosphere breathed from the Papacy's inveighing against Freemasonry in the nineteenth century. The new atmosphere was that of Father Barruel. Behind the Masonic associations, there now lurked the spectre of Revolution and an age-old network of antichristian conspirators bent on the destruction of Christianity. Again, local experiences had helped to shape this attitude. Freemasonry had played a certain role in the organisation of the Italian movement for liberation; and an even greater role had been played by the so-called Carbonari, the secret association of charcoal burners that displayed some similarity with Freemasonry and had grown into a popular guerrilla organisation after the 1820s. Mazzini had been both Mason and member of the Carbonari, and his revolutionary organisation *Young Europe* had been modelled upon these secret societies.[1346] It was hardly surprising that the Papacy did not look kindly upon these associations of initiates that had raised rebellion in the Papal States twice and had managed to chase the pope from the Vatican in 1848. Behind its local political *malheurs*, it discerned the hand of greater forces. Pius VII, Leo XII, Pius VIII, and Gregorius XVI all issued excommunications of members of Freemasonry and secret societies that betrayed an increasing preoccupation with Barruelian conspiracy ideas. Masonry now was more than just a potentially uproarious spiritual rival: it had become the hidden actor and symbolic representative of the Western Revolution.

Pius IX's *Syllabus Errorum* would, for the time being, be the crown on this development. At first sight, 'secret societies' were only mentioned in passing on the list of errors, together with socialism, communism, 'biblical societies', and clerico-liberal societies (section IV). Apart from a series of faulty doctrines, most of the errors in the syllabus concerned issues of a political nature: the conviction, for example, that 'every man is free to embrace that religion which, guided by the light of reason, he shall consider true' (15), the idea that the Church 'has not the power of using force' (error 24), the idea that education should be free from ecclesiastical authority (error 47), the right to refuse obedience to 'legitimate princes' (error

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[1344] Pope Clemens XII, *In Eminenti*, retrieved from http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Clem12/c15inemlt.htm; Rousse-Lacordaire, *Rome et les Franc-Maçons*, 46.

[1345] Rousse-Lacordaire, *Rome et les Franc-Maçons*, 74; for the context of the eighteenth-century antimasonic Bulls, see ibidem, 57-59.

[1346] Cf. E. E. Y. Hales, *Mazzini and the Secret Societies: The Making of a Myth* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956).

63), the institution of civil marriage (error 74), the abolition of Roman Catholicism as state religion (error 77), and a multitude of other faulty opinions that could be placed under the supreme falsehood: 'The Church ought to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church' (error 55). In many respects, the Syllabus was an incomplete but extensive catalogue of the political and social changes that the Western Revolution had brought about; and the continuing resistance of the Popes to the mental transformation of Europe was defiantly flung in the face of the world by the eightieth and last error that Pius IX rejected: 'The Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization'. But the real sting, with regard to Freemasonry, sat in the tail of the document. In almost offhand manner, Pius here declared that 'the present misfortune' of the Church could 'mainly' be ascribed to 'the frauds and machinations' of Freemasonry and comparable 'sects':

> Venerable Brothers, it is surprising that in our time such a great war is being waged against the Catholic Church. But anyone who knows the nature, desires and intentions of the sects, whether they be called masonic or bear another name, and compares them with the nature the systems and the vastness of the obstacles by which the Church has been assailed almost everywhere, cannot doubt that the present misfortune must mainly be imputed to the frauds and machinations of these sects. It is from them that the synagogue of Satan, which gathers its troops against the Church of Christ, takes its strength. In the past Our predecessors, vigilant even from the beginning in Israel, had already denounced them to the kings and the nations, and had condemned them time and time again, and even We have not failed in this duty. If those who would have been able to avert such a deadly scourge had only had more faith in the supreme Pastors of the Church! But this scourge, winding through sinuous caverns, . . . deceiving many with astute frauds, finally has arrived at the point where it comes forth impetuously from its hiding places and triumphs as a powerful master. Since the throng of its propagandists has grown enormously, these wicked groups think that they have already become masters of the world and that they have almost reached their pre-established goal. Having sometimes obtained what they desired, and that is power, in several countries, they boldly turn the help of powers and authorities which they have secured to trying to submit the Church of God to the most cruel servitude, to undermine the foundations on which it rests, to contaminate its splendid qualities; and, moreover, to strike it with frequent blows, to shake it, to overthrow it, and, if possible, to make it disappear completely from the earth.[1347]

The 'several countries' where Freemasonry, according to Pius IX, had managed to obtain dominion were a clear reference to the anticlerical governments that had come to power in a number of European countries. Here we come to the immediate prelude to Léo Taxil's appearance. The history of the *Risorgimento* had left the Italian electorate in a prevalent anticlerical mood; in Germany and Swiss, the *Kulturkampf* sought to reduce the position of the Roman Catholic Church; in the Netherlands and Belgium, the conflict over confessional education dominated the political debate; in Spain, liberal regimes had cautiously started to propose secularising measures from 1868 on. To a large extent, the conflict between Church and State dominated the political agenda of Western Europe. Extremist Christians demanded that the church should control the state; liberals asked for a strict separation between the public and spiritual spheres; secular nationalists pleaded for state control over the church in the name of national security. The political struggle that ensued was often concentrated on those aspects where the role of the Church had traditionally been vital: the education of children, the solemnization of marriage, the care for the sick, the burial of the dead.

[1347] Pius IX, *The syllabus of Errors condemned by Pius IX*, retrieved from http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9syll.htm. The syllabus accompanied a more brief encyclical titled *Quanta Cura* that similarly condemned 'current errors'; cf. http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9quanta.htm.

France, the heartland of revolution, was the exemplary arena for this struggle of European consciousness. For part of the French population, the Revolution had become an essential component of national identity, and the emancipatory struggle that it represented, the pride of their nation. For most French Catholics, on the other hand, the Revolution represented memories of religious persecution, the apogee of an antichristian nightmare that dissonated shrilly in the proud Catholic history of the 'eldest daughter of the Church'. The fifteen years of Bourbon restoration after the fall of Napoleon had brought a traumatized, militantly antirevolutionary, and militantly royalist clergy back from exile; and the shifting political tides in the ensuing decades had done nothing to change the basically anti-modern attitude of French Catholicism. Two nations were living in France, both claiming to be its genuine embodiment; one raised statues of Marat and Voltaire, the other of Joan of Arc; one made monuments to commemorate the destruction of the Bastille, the other provocatively built a cathedral in honour of the Holy Heart of Jesus on a hill overlooking Paris, in order to reclaim the city for Christ.

After the fall of the pragmatically pro-papal regime of Napoleon III in 1870, those who raised statues of Marat increasingly got the upper hand at the ballot box. A constant stream of legislation that sought to curb ecclesiastical influence began to stream from French parliament: laws concerning the legal status of religious congregations; laws concerning the instalment of secular education and secular care for the sick; laws concerning the regulation of Catholic processions. The large and increasingly self-conscious Catholic population felt more and more like a persecuted minority, and unable to understand the logic of the secularisers, suspected itself to be the victim of a devious plot set up behind the scenes.

In this context, the time was ripe for a revival of the Barruelian thesis. Not that the Masonic conspiracy theory had ever been dead. On the contrary: in Catholic and conservative circles, it had remained as credible as in the days that Joseph de Maistre had adopted 'Barruellism'. The complex of ideas stemming from Barruel had been popularised by bishop Louis Gaston Adrien de Ségur in a booklet from 1862 (significantly entitled *La Révolution*) and its sequel from 1867, *Les Francs-Maçons: ce qu'ils sont, ce qu'ils font, ce qu'ils veulent* ('The Freemasons: What They Are, What They Do, What They Want'), on which more later.[1348] Another bishop that we have already encountered, Monseigneur Amand-Joseph Fava from Grenoble, the 'Scourge of Freemasonry', continued in this track by publishing a series of letters in Catholic magazines that reprised Barruel with some slight updates, for instance, by quoting Bakunin's Revolutionary Catechism as an illustration of the Masonic agenda.[1349] Freemasonry, the bishop argued, pursued the combined goals of total dechristianisation and the destruction of Western civilisation by general antichristian agitation, the laicisation of education, the corruption of women, and political revolution. The protection of Church and civilization was clearly close to the French bishop's heart, for a few years later, he also founded the first French antimasonic periodical, called (without much fantasy) *La Franc-Maçonnerie*, with its first issue rolling off the printing press on 19 March 1884.[1350]

The decisive impetus for the French magazine opposing masonic power came just a few months later, and again from the Vatican, when the Encyclical *Humanum Genus* was issued by Pope Leo XIII, successor of Pius IX. Since the *Syllabum errorum*, secular troops had overrun the Vatican, and this had not exactly helped to make the tone of the Pontiff milder. In many respects, *Humanum Genus* was the most resounding papal condemnation of Freemasonry yet. It opened with a stark Augustinian picture of the 'race of man' that had been polarized since original sin in two opposite parts: the kingdom of God, 'namely, the true

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[1348] Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 30.

[1349] Mgr. Fava, *La Franc-Maçonnerie: Doctrine, histoire, gouvernement. Lettre à la Revue Catholique des Institutions et du Droit* (Paris: Librairie de la Société Bibliographique, 1880), 65-66.

[1350] Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 36.

Church of Christ'; and 'the kingdom of Satan', or those who refuse to obey divine law. These two kingdoms had been perpetually at war with each other, although not always with equal intensity. 'At this period, however,' the pope went on, 'the partisans of evil seem to be combining together, and to be struggling with united vehemence, led on or assisted by that strongly organised and widespread association called the Freemasons. No longer making any secret of their purposes, they are now boldly rising up against God Himself.'[1351] The ultimate aim of their activities was the destruction of Church and Christendom, as had been proven abundantly by their outrages against the Roman Pontiff himself: 'The Pontiff was first, for specious reasons, thrust out from the bulwark of his liberty and of his right, the civil princedom; soon, he was unjustly driven into a condition which was unbearable because of the difficulties raised on all sides; and now the time has come when the partisans of the sects openly declare, what in secret among themselves they have for a long time plotted, that the sacred power of the Pontiffs must be abolished, and that the papacy itself, founded by divine right, must be utterly destroyed.'[1352] As his predecessor had done, Leo went on to ascribe most of modernity's bitter fruits to the Freemasons and the 'naturalism' that they promoted: religious indifference and religious relativism, the separation between Church and State, 'journals and pamphlets with neither moderation nor shame', immoral stage plays and artworks, civil marriage and legal divorce, and 'doctrines of politics' that supposed every man to be by nature free and governments to be bound to the will of their subjects. 'Moresque et instituta ethnicorum duodeviginti saeculorum intervallo revocare, insignis stultitiae est impietatisque audacissimae.' the Pope concluded: 'to bring back after a lapse of eighteen centuries the manners and customs of the pagans, is signal folly and audacious impiety'.[1353]
As a remedy against the encroachments of 'the sect', Leo XIII urged, first of all, 'to tear away the mask of Freemasonry, and let it be seen as it really is'.[1354] This advice was followed with great enthusiasm, not just by the Catholic bishops to whom it formally had been directed, but also by Catholic publicists of every description. Among them was Taxil himself, who cited Leo's call 'to tear away the mask of Freemasonry' on the frontispiece of virtually all his antimasonic works and always claimed that *Humanus Genus* had provided the original inspiration for his Masonic venture (and there is nothing in the chronology of his publications to make this improbable). But Taxil was just one voice amongst many. Leo's Encyclical functioned as a catalyst on conservative Catholic opinion, legitimising long-held convictions about Masonic machinations and stimulating the overall acceptance of such ideas within the Catholic community. The former rabbi Paul Rosen, for example, only started to pour out his revelations after the pope had lashed out against the Freemasons, dedicating his second book to Leo XIII, for which he had obtained the latter's explicit permission.[1355] In Grenoble, Bishop Fava promptly changed the name of his recently founded periodical *La Franc-Maçonnerie* to *La Franc-Maçonnerie démasqué*; he also founded a 'Crusade of Free-Catholics' that was meant to function as a Catholic mirror organisation to powerful Freemasonry. The enthusiastic bishop was also the man behind the handbook for antimasonists that appeared in Grenoble in 1887, signed 'un franc-catholique'.[1356] This flurry of organisational activity was reflected on a wider scale. *Humanum Genus* had suggested the Third Order of Saint Francis as a suitable organisation to lead the struggle against

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[1351] Pope Leo XIII, *Humanum Genus*, section 2, retrieved from www.vatican.va.
[1352] Pope Leo XIII, *Humanum Genus*, section 15, ibidem.
[1353] Pope Leo XIII, *Humanum Genus*, section 24 ; Latin text from *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, 16:417-433, there 436, ibidem.
[1354] Pope Leo XIII, *Humanum Genus*, section 31, ibidem.
[1355] Paul Rosen, *L'Ennemie Sociale. Histoire documentée des faits et gestes de la Franc-Maçonnerie de 1717 à 1890 en France, en Belgique et en Italie* (Paris: Bloud & Barral 1890), i; Leo XIII's letter of permission is quoted on pp. iv-v.
[1356] Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 128-130.

Freemasonry; but when this order proved reluctant to fulfil its papal assignment, lay initiative soon filled up the gap. In 1885, the Pope gave his blessing to a Belgian project to found an Antimasonic League. Characteristically, this initiative had its origin in the *National Union for the Rectification of Injustices*, a Belgian organisation of lay Catholics that sought to redress ecclesial losses brought about by the legal secularisation in Belgium. Control over the movement was soon taken over by Italian straw men of the Vatican. At the same time, local organisations under patronage of the archangel Saint Michael had been founded in the North of France, and in 1893, representatives of the French Catholic press created a nationwide Antimasonic Committee. This eventually merged with the Antimasonic League to form a Universal Antimasonic Union with branches as far away as Ecuador in South America.
These organisations were indicative of the atmosphere of 'cold' civil war that characterised those European countries where secularising governments confronted a Catholic population that was increasingly vocal in its demands. In France, an otherwise ludicrous incident served to reveal the radical antagonistic attitudes of French Catholics and French Republicans *vis à vis* each other and the role that was assigned to Freemasonry in this. When a group of young Roman Catholic pilgrims wrote 'Long live the Pope' in the guest book of the Roman Pantheon, the Italian government filed a formal complaint with its French counterpart. This reacted by banning French pilgrimages to Rome for a certain period of time. Fierce protests of Catholics followed; and in 1892, Monsignor Gouthe-Soulard, the archbishop of Aix-en-Provence, wrote an angry letter of protest to the French Minister of Public Worship, in which he summed up the impression of many of his coreligionists in a single infamous sentence: 'We are not living under a Republic, we are living under Freemasonry.'[1357] The bishop faced severe legal repercussions for this *faux mot*, resulting in a 3,000 franc fine and temporary suspension of his salary. This only served to make him a hero to many Catholics, and increased their perception of being a persecuted minority in a state dominated by the machinations of Freemasonry. When the first crusade was festively commemorated in 1895, French Catholicism used the occasion to issue a thinly veiled declaration of war against the secular republic. Thousands of hard-line Catholics gathered at Clemond-Ferrand to hear the celebrated Dominican preacher Father Monsabre (for whom nomen was certainly omen) proclaim a new crusade 'against an enemy for whom the Turk was nothing but an instrument, and who threatens to destroy the sacred reign of Jesus Christ'. This enemy was Satan himself, who had taken control of the public powers by way of political leaders that 'despicably receive their orders from impious and hateful sectarians'.[1358] Although he did not explicitly name these 'sectarians', every person in his audience understood who he had in mind.

how Freemasons became Satanists

It was this atmosphere of paranoia and persecution that provided the hotbed in which Taxil's mystification could flourish, while at the same time a long pedigree of antimasonic literature had prepared his readership to believe almost everything that was wicked concerning Freemasonry. The bulk of Taxil's 'revelations' about the Lodge had simply been gleaned from this long tradition of lore and literature. He also added to it, however. His most important contribution – and an essential one for our present subject – was the introduction of *Satanism* in Freemasonry.

[1357] Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 69; Alexander Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics 1890-1898* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 49. 'You talk of peace, but your actions reflect hatred and persecution because Freemasonry, eldest daughter of Satan, guides them,' Gouthe-Soulard additionally wrote to the French Minister of Public Worship.

[1358] T.R.P. Monsabre, *La Croisade au XIXe siècle: Discours prononcé à Clermont-Ferrand à l'occasion du 8e centenaire de la 1re Croisade, le 18 Mai 1895* (Paris: Bureaux de La Revue Thomiste, s.a.), 5, 17.

Even here, Taxil's allegations were not completely without precedent. Already in 1698, shortly after the Lodge had gained prominence in England, an anonymous brochure had appeared in London that denounced Freemasonry as the precursor of the Antichrist and a den of devil-worship.[1359] This, however, had occurred in the wake of the Wars of Religion and amidst the last embers of the witchcraft persecutions. Since then, accusations of Satanism had gone out of vogue, and the antimasonic literature of the eighteenth century mainly reproached freemasons for spreading religious indifference through their tolerant admittance policy, and for conspiring against the State in their secret assemblies. With slight modifications, these themes remained paramount in the nineteenth century. For all its talk about the 'kingdom of Satan', *Humanum Genus* accused the freemasons of being pantheists, rationalists, and naturalists – not Satanists. And even though the very titles of their books sometimes suggest otherwise, Catholic writers on Freemasonry prior to Taxil generally did not describe Freemasons as self-consciously venerating the Devil. In 1825, for instance, an anonymous 'Letter from Satan to the Freemasons' appeared in France; clearly intended as a fictive construction, it quoted Satan himself praising the Freemasons for their promotion of the 'reign of the philosophers', the 'progress of the Enlightenment', and the 'triumph and glory of Reason'. The Catholic author of the booklet took the trouble to write a letter of response to the devil, in which he characteristically argued that legal religious tolerance was a device to 'inoculate atheism' into the nation of France (a statement that ensured him one month in prison and a 100 franc fine for attacking 'civic tolerance' and the 'liberty of cults').[1360] Whenever 'Satan', 'satanic', or even 'Satanism' was mentioned in connection with Freemasonry, generally one of the 'older' significations of the word was implied. Either it was simply a way to indicate the extremely nefarious nature of the sect and its conspiracy; or it pointed to the role the Lodge was said to play in the advance of the Antichrist (by plotting revolution and by spreading atheism, 'naturalism', and anarchism); alternatively, the term 'Satanism' denoted the diabolical essence of Masonic ideology, without Freemasons being thought to be aware of this.[1361] Frequently, these significations were used simultaneously, mishmashed together with the vehemence of alarmist rhetoric. But even Paul Rosen's books, sporting lurid titles like *Satan & Co* and filled to the brim with demonising metaphors, did not claim that freemasons were involved in *intentional* devil worship. It was their antichristian ideology and their secret direction of global antichristian politics that made Freemasonry a genuine Company of Satan. 'La Révolution sociale, c'est les *Gesta Satanæ per massones*', Rosen summarized: 'The Revolution of Society is the work of Satan by the Freemasons'. The former rabbi sometimes played with the suggestion that more was going on; but only among the Freemasons of Italy, who publicly glorified their 'satanic filiations', did he find sufficient indications to point out the existence of a veritable 'infernal cult'.[1362]

[1359] David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century, 1590-1710* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 227. The pamphlet, entitled *Mischiefs and Evils practised in the Sight of God by those called Freed Masons*, stated that Freemasonry was 'the Anti-Christ which was to come leading Men from Fear of God. For how should Men meet in secret Places and with secret Signs taking Care that none observe them to do the Work of God; are these not the Ways of Evil-doers?'

[1360] *Lettre de Satan aux Francs-Maçons, suivi d'une réponse à Satan* (Paris: Potey, 1825), 13-14. Rousse-Lacordaire, *Rome et les Franc-Maçons*, 111, cites this title to indicate that the 'Luciferian theme' was already current in the first half of the nineteenth century; but it is clear that its author does not intend to imply the existence of a literal, formal veneration of Satan by Freemasonry. For the legal repercussions, cf. *Réflexions sur le procès intenté à M. Waille, au sujet de l'écrit intitulé: 'Lettre de Satan aux francs-maçons': Extrait du Mémorial Catholique (février, 1826)* ([Paris]: Impr. De Gueffier, 1826).

[1361] Cf. Union Antimaçonnique Universelle, *Actes du I^re^ Congrès antimaçonnique international*, 1:334-335, where these varying interpretations play an essential role.

[1362] Rosen, *L'Ennemie Sociale*, 348-349; the phrase about *Gesta Satanæ per massones* can be found on the title page and is quoted again in the last lines of the book on p. 424. In *Satan et Cie*, Rosen summarized the 'Supreme Secret' of Scottish and Cabbalistic Freemasonry as 'Satan is the One and Only God' (see the explicatory plate on

It is not hard to see, however, that the consistent Satanic rhetoric of antimasonism invited literal interpretations. Pius IX had already called the freemasons 'children of the Demon' in one of his pontifical statements; and although Leo XIII had refrained from completely identifying the Lodge with the 'Synagogue of Satan' in *Humanum Genus*, lesser Catholic publicists soon forgot about this kind of subtleties.[1363] It was a relatively small step, from here, to hold that Freemasons engaged in formal worship of the Devil. In addition, we can only speculate what conceptions of Freemasonry were flourishing among the 'general populace' at this period of time. Behind the allegations of Virginie, for instance, the possessed and host-vomiting woman from Agen that we encountered in the previous chapter, the contours of the Lodge are almost tangibly present. Although Freemasonry is not mentioned by name in the accounts of her case, her story of a temple for the Demon where the notables of the town gather to desecrate the host and venerate the devil conspicuously mirrors later Taxilian allegations against Freemasons, while at the same time faithfully reflecting the practices commonly attributed to heretics and non-Christians in premodern and early modern times. Old patterns of attribution had survived in many places during the eighteenth century, as we saw above. Among the 'uneducated classes', the conceptions that supported them may well have remained present even during the nineteenth century, particularly in areas that had been only superficially touched by modernity.[1364]

Prior to Taxil, these old prejudices and new rumours seldom surfaced in the printed antimasonic literature. A prominent exception had been *Les Francs-Maçons: ce qu'ils sont, ce qu'ils font, ce qu'ils veulent*, the above-mentioned popular booklet by Bishop Ségur. After repeating the familiar ideas of Barruel and insisting that the Masonic 'sectarians' did not shrink from assassination or sacrilege, the bishop recounted how during the revolutionary year of 1848, nocturnal gatherings had been discovered in Rome where male and female freemasons celebrated 'that which they call the Mass of the Devil'. During this ceremony, the attendants spat and stepped on crucifixes and profaned hosts brought from Church 'or sold to them for money by some evil and poor old woman, like Judas'. The Masons would end the ceremony by stabbing Christ's bodily manifestation with daggers, after which all lights would be extinguished; Ségur prudently refrained from telling what happened next. From Italy, the alarmed bishop claimed, these practices had spread to France; 'and very recently, the existence has been discovered of a kind of under-masonry, already completely organised, with the exclusive purpose of making common cause regarding the surest and most efficient way to destroy the Faith.' This society was organised in small cells of twelve to fifteen persons and recruited predominantly among educated or at least influential people; its centre was in Paris, with branches in many other cities in France. 'One has named to me, with absolutely certainty, Paris, Marseille, Aix, Avignon, Châlons-sur-Marne, Laval.'[1365]

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front of book). But it remained somewhat unclear whether the followers of these rites were thought to be aware of this: it was only Rosen himself, it appears, who had unveiled this hidden core.

[1363] Aldo A. Mola, 'La Ligue antimaçonnique et son influence politique et culturelle aux confines des XIX^e^ et XX^e^ siècles,' in *Les courants antimaçonniques hier et aujourd'hui*, ed. Alain Dierkens. Problèmes d'histoire des religions 4 (Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1993), 39-55, esp. 40. Pius IX qualified members of secret societies as 'children of the Demon' in his pastoral letter *Singulari quadam* (issued 9 December 1854); cf. Rousse-Lacordaire, *Rome et les Franc-Maçons*, 109.

[1364] One of the few studies devoted to conceptions from folklore regarding Freemasonry is Karl Olbrich, *Die Freimaurer im deutschen Volksglauben: Die im Volke umlaufenden Vorstellungen und Erzählungen von den Freimauern* (Breslau: M. & H. Marcus, 1930), who argues that the belief that Masons were involved with the devil was nearly universal and far predated 'der berüchtigte Riesenschwindel des Schriftstellers Leo Taxil' (cf. pages 8-9, 13). Although this could well be true, it must be noted that all material presented by Olbricht is from the early twentieth century and in some cases explicitly connected with Roman Catholic antimasonic agitation (see particularly p. 84, 26).

[1365] Ségur, *Les Francs-Maçons*, 46-48.

We can only guess what real facts lay behind these wild assumptions: possibly some confusion with the Carbonari, who featured some sinister although not necessarily Satanist initiation rituals. Important elements of Taxil's constructions are already present in embryo form here: the existence of hidden 'backdoor lodges', which had already been proposed by Barruel; the sacrilegious initiation rites including violation of the host; the suggestion of promiscuous festivities. Publications like Ségur's, and Catholic theories about a Masonic plot in general, were also a definite source of inspiration for Vintras and Boullan in their conception of a network of secret Satanist cells.[1366] Yet the urban legend recounted by Ségur was an exception in the landscape of Catholic antimasonic literature of his day, which maintained its emphasis on the political nature of Freemasonry's plot against Christianity. Wilder ideas about Masonic worship of Satan would remain a marginal phenomenon until the colourful accounts of Doctor Bataille and Diana Vaughan appeared on the scene.

Another rich current of Catholic literature may have been more important in preparing the Satanist theme of Taxil's writings: that of polemic publications against occultism and esotericism.[1367] In this field as well, the particular circumstances of the nineteenth century had provided new bottles for old wine. As the eighteenth century had progressed, even Roman Catholic theologians had tended to frown upon the old demonologies. Publications that endorsed traditional practises of attribution had dwindled to a mere trickle, represented by eccentrics like the abbé Fiard, who had defended the reality of witchcraft with some virtuosity against the scorn of the *philosophes* and had maintained the duty of the State to combat this pest by force of arms.[1368] Fiard survived the French Revolution with his conviction unshaken, and after the Revolutionary storm subsided, he published a work in which he blamed this devilish work on the tolerated presence of magicians, ventriloquists, and 'demonolâtres', idolaters of demons. In a passage that was clearly inspired by the recently published work of Barruel, Fiard insisted that the political plots of 'illuminates, Jacobins, and Backlodge Masons' provided insufficient explanation for the overwhelming success of their conjuration against the religious and profane order. Only the involvement of supernatural powers could explain the cataclysm of the Revolution. 'If Jacobins, Freemasons, illuminates do not in fact communicate with demons, if they are not initiated in their mysteries of damnation, however numerous they might be, their wrath would be impotent against the whole of the human race. But if they partake in this commerce, if they have in truth made their pact with Hell, a pact they transmit to their progenitors (and this is in fact the secret of most of them) – then here we have found our genuine conspirators, then here we have our slaughterers.'[1369]
Even in his own day, Fiard was considered a 'fou littèraire' by all but his most sympathetic readers, and his thesis of supernatural conspiracy would remain buried, for all practical purposes, until the time of Taxil. Yet even before that, Satan had already made his reappearance on the pages of Catholic authors on occultism. The rising tide of Romanticism

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[1366] In Boullan's *Annales de la Sainteté au XIXe siècle*, many articles on 'secret societies' can be found that clearly reflect and extend current Roman Catholic attitudes in this respect. 'La magie au sein des sociétés secrètes: Remède divin à ce grand mal,' *Annales de la Sainteté au XIXe siècle* (February 1875) 62:138-146, for example, explicitly concerns Freemasonry. Interestingly, an idea that would be fully exploited by Taxil can already be found here, namely, the notion of the three degrees of Satanist involvement in secret societies: that of ignorant ordinary members, who are told these organisations only serve to practice charity; a second level of people who use them for their (political) ambitions; and the inner core of 'adeptes de Satan'. Similar articles on 'les perils des sociétés secrètes' can be found in *Annales de la Sainteté au XIXe siècle* (April 1873) 39:307-310, and (January 1875) 61:68-72.

[1367] I have made extensive use of the fine overview of this literature in Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 65-99 for the following paragraphs.

[1368] These articles were reproduced as *Lettres magiques, ou lettres sur le diable* ('En France': s.i., 1791).

[1369] Abbé Fiard, *La France trompée par les magiciens et démonolatres du dix-huitième siècle, fait démontré par des faits* (Paris: Grégoire & Thouvenin, 1803), 88-89.

had also had an impact on Roman Catholicism. It had stimulated a heightened interest in practices of popular devotion, in the 'pure' religious expression of the Middle Ages, and in the supernatural and miraculous, be it of divine or demonic origin.[1370] From the middle of the century, moreover, the spread of spiritism had once again transformed the occult into a table talk subject for educated people. Catholic authors like Jules Eudes de Mirville (1802-1873) and, particularly, Henri-Roger Gougenot des Mousseaux (1805-1876) reacted to this trend with great agility. They applauded the renewed thirst for the transcendental that could be discerned behind the increasing popularity of 'table rapping' and occultism; and they commended the disgust with prevailing doctrines of 'materialism' that occultist writers often expressed. The Catholic Church, they maintained, had upheld the reality of the supernatural for centuries against all odds of adverse ideological winds. She had also taught, however, that not all encounters of the third kind were necessarily beneficial. In his first book on occultism, *La magie au dix-neuvième siècle* ('Magic in the Nineteenth Century'), Gougenot de Mousseaux had devoted many pages to refuting the idea promoted by occultists like Éliphas Lévi (whom he quoted extensively), according to which the 'fluidic agent' acting in magic was a neutral, semi-natural force that could be operated at will by the magician.[1371] Ultimately, he argued, all supernatural manifestations were either of divine or diabolic origin: and only the Church was able to determine with certainty which superhuman power was working when. De Mousseaux prudently warned against an overly enthusiastic attribution to the fallen angel of every extraordinary occurrence. Yet this prudence did not notably affect the pages of his own publications, where he did not shrink from dragging the whole supernatural bestiary of Early Modern demonology out of the closet again, including lycanthropes, vampires, succubae, and incubi.[1372]

In contrast with Fiard, Gougenot de Mousseaux was no lone eccentric writing in isolation. As an expert on the occult, he was taken seriously in Catholic circles. At the important Catholic Congress of Malines in 1863, for instance, he was invited to expound his ideas during a session behind closed doors.[1373] Among the educated Catholic public, the intervention of the supernatural was increasingly thought plausible, be it in its demonic or divine variant. This was reflected in the apparitions of Mary in La Salette in 1846; it was also reflected in the *Annales du surnaturel au 19^{e} siècle* compiled by Péladan père; even the activities of Eugène Vintras and Joseph Boullan on the fringes of the Catholic world were a manifestation of this general trend. These examples could easily be multiplied. In 1888, when *Blackwood's Magazine* published a fictitious story that described how the Devil had made acte de présence during a spiritist séance in Paris, many French readers took this account at face value. Much speculation occurred regarding the true identity of its characters; and for years to come, the apparition of Satan as a young man of immense melancholy but fashionable attire would be recounted in quite serious Catholic publications on the occult.[1374]

[1370] Duffy, *Saints and Sinners*, 225-227; Cholvy, *La religion en France*, 21-24; Vincent Viaene, 'The Roman Question. Catholic Mobilisation and Papal Diplomacy during the Pontificate of Pius IX (1846-1878),' in *The Black International/L'International noire 1870-1878*, ed. Emiel Lambers (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 135-177, here 135-136.

[1371] Chevalier Gougenot des Mousseaux, *La magie au dix-neuvième siècle: Ses agents, ses vérités, ses mensognes* (Paris: Henri Plon & E. Dentu, 1860), esp. 450; Lévi is quoted on pp. 228, 225, 138, and 137.

[1372] Cf. Chevalier Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Les Hauts Phénomènes de la Magie, précédés du Spiritisme Antique* (Paris: Henri Plon, 1864). It is important to note, however, that Gougenot de Mousseaux did not consider the occultists to be engaged in wilful and purposeful veneration of Satan: generally speaking, they were deluded about the real nature of their activities, in the same way as the pagans of Antiquity had venerated idols without suspecting them to be demons.

[1373] Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Les Hauts Phénomènes de la Magie*, i(n).

[1374] Cf. 'His Interview with Satan,' *New York Times*, 21 October 1888. The story originally appeared under the title 'Aut Diabolus aut nihil: The true story of a hallucination' in *Blackwood's Magazine* 1 (October 1888) 44:475-499, and was signed 'X.L.', a pseudonym for the writer Julien Osgood (1852–1925). Bishop Meurin

It is clear that Taxil only continued an already existing trend when he recounted tales of weekly apparitions of Lucifer in Charleston, South Carolina; and sheer cosmological coherence required some kind of fusion between the increasing insistence on a diabolical presence by Catholic anti-occultism and the Barruelian thesis of the Masonic world conspiracy. Antimasonic literature contained some openings for such a fusion. Barruel had already accused the 'Kabbalistic' branch of Rosicrucian Freemasonry of having regular commerce with spirits and of honouring the firm conviction 'that the *worst of them*, the worst of those beings that the vulgar people call *demons*, *never is to be considered bad company for a human being*.'[1375] Allegations like this were occasionally repeated in subsequent literature, mostly in picturesque detail: the veritable satanic character of Freemasonry still lay in the part it played in Satan's plan for world domination through its sinister political ploys and its diabolic humanist ideology. A few isolated authors went further: the Catholic lawyer Joseph Bizouard (1797-1870), for instance, published a 'philosophical and historical essay' about 'contacts between Man and Demon' in which he not only designated the ideology of the freemasons as 'Satanism pure and simple' but also claimed that they, in this very century, frequently 'consulted the devil'.[1376]

Bizouard's assertions, however, remained buried in the six volumes and almost four thousand pages of his gigantic work; and it is to Taxil that the – somewhat debatable – credit is given for performing the fusion of a politically-oriented Barruelian antimasonism and a demonological antispiritism. It was no coincidence that *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle* spoke of 'Luciferian Freemasonry, or: the Mysteries of Spiritism' in its subtitle.[1377] Taxil's Palladism was the crown and logical outcome of a trajectory that had started with Barruel and Fiard, the final blending of two traditions of Catholic polemic. This partially accounts for its surprising credibility among the Catholic public. From about 1892 until Taxil's final self-exposure, the Satanism thesis dominated the Catholic discourse on Freemasonry, and the existence of secret Satan worship and hidden Luciferian superlodges was embraced as the official master code for interpreting the political and religious realities of the fin de siècle. Palladism seeped into the catechisms that were used to teach the children of the faithful; and when Monsabre preached his crusade at Clermond-Ferrand, he did not just speak about 'impious and hateful sectarians', but about 'impious and hateful sectarians of whom Satan is the Sovereign Grand Master and the dark idol'.[1378] At Trent, in 1896, the crème de la crème of Catholic antimasonism formally ratified the idea of a cult of Satan operating within Freemasonry. Their final conclusions did not mince words about this, and the first four points of these deserve to be quoted at length:

The first international antimasonic Congress declares itself to be fully convinced:

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nevertheless quotes it as an 'authentic apparition of the Devil' in *La Franc-Maçonnerie, Synagogue de Satan*, 218-224. The tale may also have served as inspiration for the portrait of Satan in black tie that is featured on the gravure in Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle*, 1:953. (For those who have doubts: in 1895, 'X.L.' wrote that the episode was fictive, as were all the characters it portrayed, except for 'His Satanic Majesty' himself, whose description was, 'as indeed many of my readers will recognise at once – a photograph taken from life'. The tale was based on a 'rather meagre' anecdote told by a French Catholic nobleman regarding a priest who attended a séance and saw the Devil. Cf. X.L., *Aut Diabolus Aut Nihil, and Other Tales* (London: Methuen, 1895), viii-ix.)

[1375] Barruel, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du jacobinisme*, 2:327.

[1376] Cited in Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 91.

[1377] See also Arthur Lillie, *The Worship of Satan in Modern France* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1896), xxi, where Palladism is characterized as 'a combination of freemasonry and modern spirituality: 'Hence its great success.'

[1378] Régis Ladous, 'Le spiritisme et les démons dans les catéchismes français du XIXe siècle,' in *Le Défi Magique II. Satanisme, sorcellerie*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Martin and Massimo Introvigne (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1994), 203-228, there 219-223; Monsabre, *La Croisade au XIXe siècle*, 17.

> Firstly, that Freemasonry is a religious and Manichean sect; that the final key of its secrets and mysteries is the cult of Lucifer or Satan, worshipped in the back-lodges in opposition to the God of the Catholics;
> Secondly, that the Demon (inspirer of the Masonic sects), knowing that he will never succeed in obtaining the direct adoration of mankind in general, seeks to sow in its souls, by way of Freemasonry, the seeds of naturalism, which is nothing else than the complete emancipation of Man in juxtaposition to God;
> Thirdly, that in order to implant this impious naturalism in the world, Freemasonry strives to familiarise mankind with the idea of the equality of all religions, the only true one and the false ones, and to substitute the Catholic atmosphere with a Masonic atmosphere, by way of a Press without God and a school without God.
> Fourthly, that one particular method used by Freemasonry to lead to perdition those famishing for the supernatural but not yet ripe for Luciferian Manicheism, is to coax them into surrendering themselves to the evil practices of Spiritism.[1379]

Taxil can be held almost single-handedly responsible for the insertion of 'the cult of Satan, worshipped in the back-lodges' in this marvellous concoction of more than a century of Roman Catholic conspiracy thinking.[1380] We may well say that this was no mean achievement.

fighting democracy by democratic means

We can see now why Taxil was believed not only by simple, uneducated Catholic believers, but also by erudite Catholics like the reviewer of the *Revue Bénédictine* or the bishop of Grenoble. His revelations confirmed suspicions that had already been raised in Catholic publications for decades and that had gained further urgency in the polarised atmosphere of fin de siècle France. 'You wanted someone to tell you this,' Taxil had quipped to someone scolding him after his April 1897 press conference, 'So, very well, I've told…'[1381] In fact, Taxil's Catholic publications read at times like a grotesque catalogue of the apprehensions of ultramontane French Catholicism. Satanism was attributed to almost every incarnation of 'the other': the 'Americanisation' that Huysmans had already flagellated (with Palladism itself as the supremely Satanic American export product); archenemy Germany (where one of Satanism's international headquarters was located and where chancellor Otto Bismarck was receiving his orders directly from Satan); the British (also rife with Satanism and hosting a Palladist underground weapon factory in their imperial stronghold Gibraltar); Protestants of all denominations (to meet a Protestant was to meet a criminal; and 'often a criminal doubling up with a Satanist'); non-Christian and non-Western religions (mere cover-ups for Satanism); socialists, feminists, biologists promoting evolution, etc. The bankers of aggressive capitalism and the terrorists of radical anarchism were both at the service of Satanic Freemasonry. This improbable syllabus of Satanists tends to look rather comical from today's vantage point. But for Taxil's Catholic audience, part of its seduction lay precisely in this comprehensiveness. 'All that is modern, is from the Devil,' French fin de siècle writer Léon Bloy had written, effectively summarizing the intuition of many Catholics.[1382] Taxil made this intuition inevitably simple and refreshingly literal. All that was modern entailed worshipping Satan.

Catholic antimodernity, however, was just one side of the picture that explained the prolific success of Taxil's pseudo-revelations. At the same time, paradoxically, Taxil's massive mystification was only possible because, in much of its practical methods, fin de siècle

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[1379] Union Antimaçonnique Universelle, *Actes du I^re^ Congrès antimaçonnique international*, 1:337.
[1380] Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 162, also considers Taxil's influence determining for the adoption of the 'Luciferian thesis' in Catholic antimasonic discourse.
[1381] L. Nemours Godré, 'La fin de Diana,' *La Vérité* (21 April 1897).
[1382] Quoted in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 14n.

Catholicism had become highly modern. When intransigent Catholics pleaded for restrictions on the freedom of the press, they usually did so on the pages of their own very developed network of press organs. These periodicals, by the way, sometimes carried strangely liberal-sounding names as 'The Public Good' or 'Liberty'; although this usually referred strictly to the liberty they demanded for the Catholic Church against secular 'persecution'.[1383] Catholic mass organisations mobilised and directed Catholic opinion in a way that rivalled and at the same time closely resembled the socialist movement. In several European countries, Catholic political parties had taken seats in parliament, brought to political prominence by the 'revolutionary' democratic system they abhorred. Remarkably, it was seldom the more liberal Catholics who took the fore in the creation of this Catholic mass movement, but mostly their ultramontane and ultraconservative coreligionists. It was the existence of this national and international net of Catholic organisations and press organs that enabled Taxil to find such a wide audience, sell so many of his books, and tell his tall tales of Palladism to Catholic farmers in remote provincial villages. In retrospect, it is striking how closely his activities as an antimasonic agitator mirrored his earlier methods as an anticlerical publicist (not excepting the occasional dash into pornography). Reactionary Roman Catholics, it seems, were pursuing their goals by methods of modern mass mobilisation similar to those of their radical opponents.

Although its first sparks had been spontaneous, there was deliberate policy behind this Roman Catholic organisational activity. The dissolution of the Papal State in 1870 was a vital moment in the shaping of this policy. Before the Italian troops marched into the Eternal City, the Pope had mostly relied on diplomacy to pursue his political goals, parleying with the European powers as a head of state with other head of states. The events of 1870 effectively ended this. Although popes would never cease to cling to the regalia of temporal sovereignty, there was now in fact only one effective power base left to them: the spiritual authority of the papacy over millions and millions of Catholic believers in Europe and the rest of the world. The pressure these Catholics could and did exert on the governments in their countries now became the weapon the popes held against the political leaders of Europe.[1384]

Pius IX, for all his thundering against the Western Revolution, had been a pioneer in this respect. He had greatly stimulated the Catholic press and made untiring appearances before Catholic mass audiences, and he had also proved himself well disposed to the Catholic lay organisations that had mushroomed all over Europe. The shock of 1870 had stimulated the Curia further down this line. The antichristian movement that was conquering Europe had now swept over the stronghold of the apostolic successor of Peter himself. The rulers of Christendom had deserted the Pope. In this atmosphere of war with the world, the Curia pondered radical options. 'The princes have abandoned us: so let Catholic democracy take form,' the leading *zelanti* Cardinal, Filippo De Angelis, commented, 'Let us go to school by the children of darkness… We'll do some Mazzinism on our own.'[1385] Ultramontane lay radicals even considered calling a 'Catholic strike' to paralyse Europe and force it to abandon its collision course with the Church.[1386] This extremist idea was not adopted; but political agitation by the Catholic populations of Europe increasingly became an essential and consciously wielded weapon in the arsenal of the Papacy.

Leo XIII had inherited Pius's intense involvement with the press, but was hesitant at first about Catholic lay organisations. Lay organisations inevitably led to lay influence, and he

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[1383] The Universal Antimasonic Union also featured the devise 'Pro Libertas et pro Patria' in its banners: with this the liberation of Catholic countries from the Masonic stranglehold was meant.

[1384] Cf. Viaene, 'The Roman Question,' esp. 162.

[1385] Angelis uttered these remarkable words against the prominent Dutch ultramontane Willem Cramer, who visited Rome in October 1870: Viaene, 'The Roman Question,' 162.

[1386] Viaene, 'The Roman Question,' 169.

favoured strong sacerdotalism: divinity had appointed priests and their bishops to herd the sheep.[1387] He changed his opinion, however, after the first years of his reign. The Catholic organisations had become too important for Vatican policy, serving as a tool to control the faithful, organise political resistance, and reclaim terrains of society that had been wrested from the Church by secularising governments. In fact, Leo eventually would go further than his predecessor in playing the card of modern mass politics. In 1891, in the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, he expressed his worries about the situation of the 'labouring poor' in terms that sounded almost like socialism, describing their plight as 'a yoke little better than that of slavery itself'.[1388] In 1892, he shook French Catholicism to its foundations when he enjoined the French bishops to acknowledge the French Republic as a legitimate form of government and work together with its rulers, the so-called *ralliement* – sweeping away the holy alliance of throne and altar that had been the cornerstone of Catholic political thinking for almost a century and that was practically part of their profession of faith for many French Catholics. The Catholic Church, the Vatican now claimed, had no preference for any particular form of government, as long as the prerogatives of the Church and the principles of Christianity were honoured.

Naive observers may have believed that the Pope had turned liberal. Nothing could be further from the truth, however. Leo had been the driving spirit behind the *Syllabum Errorum* before he became pope, and after he sat on the throne of Peter, he endeavoured to make the works of the medieval philosopher Thomas of Aquino the standard of orthodoxy in Catholic science. Behind the smiling mask of a frail old man, his conviction that the nature of Europe's prevailing ideological winds was utterly antichristian was as firm as that of Pius IX. Yet he was also a fundamentally *political* pope. His overtures to workers' demands – however genuine his concern about their plight – were certainly meant to retain the Catholic masses in the lower social strata for the Catholic political program, an increasingly urgent matter with universal suffrage underway in more and more European countries. (And on this point, Leo's course of action would prove prophetic, assuring the rise of Catholic popular parties as a determining factor in the political spectrum of many European countries.) Considerations of political realism had also been prevalent in the *ralliement*. After the French defeat of 1870, the Vatican had briefly hoped that the Bourbon monarchy would return to power in France. Instead, the provisional Third Republic that had installed itself in Paris proved to be a lasting phenomenon, and after 1873, restoration of the French throne was fast becoming a political chimera. The alliance between throne and altar that had proved fruitful in the years of the Reaction, when the Holy Alliance had reinstated monarchical rule in most of Europe, now had become an ideological deadlock that only hindered the Holy See in pursuing its political objectives.

These political objectives were twofold, a short-term one and a long-term one. The short-term objective, as it had been under Pius IX, was the restoration of the Papal States in order to secure the temporal sovereignty and autonomy of the Papacy. To accomplish this, the Vatican hoped to coax the Great Powers of Europe into forcing Italy to restore the Patrimony of Peter. For a short while, Leo had put his hope for this in Germany, where Bismarck gradually abandoned the *Kulturkampf* when it became clear that his aggressive secularisation only

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[1387] Emiel Lamberts, 'Catholic Congresses as Amplifiers of International Catholic Opinion,' in *The Papacy and the New World Order: Vatican Diplomacy, Catholic Opinion and International Politics at the Time of Leo XIII, 1878-1903 = La Papauté et le nouvel ordre mondial: Diplomatie vaticane, opinion catholique et politique internationale au temps de Léo XIII*, ed. Vincent Viaene (Bruxelles: Institut Historique Belge de Rome/Belgisch Historisch Instituut te Rome, 2005), 213-223, there 217.

[1388] Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, section 3. Retrieved from http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/l13rerum.htm.

fortified Catholic political resistance. When Leo's German hopes proved deceptive, he turned his eyes on France. The primary aim of the *ralliement* was to enable French Catholics to enter into the political life of the Republic, so they could use their influence, possibly in tandem with other conservatives, to turn France into an ally of the Holy See once more. [1389] 'When you follow my advice,' Leo had told the sceptical bishop of Montpellier, 'You will have 400 Catholic parliament members and you will be able to reinstall the monarchy. I am a monarchist myself.'[1390] In its diplomatic power play to ensure the restitution of temporal power, the Vatican frequently employed Catholic opinion as a tool in the most literal sense of the word: something that could be used at will to put the fear of the Lord in local governments, and laid aside again in accordance with the unpredictable twists of international politics (although in reality, Catholic indignation often proved not so easy to hush up).[1391]

In its long-term objective, the Vatican under Leo XIII also continued the policy of Pius IX. Stemming the swell tide of 'dechristianisation' was the goal towards which its grand effort was directed: and dechristianisation in this context did not only refer to the desertion of the faith by a growing number of individual Europeans and Americans, but also, and primarily, to the demolition of the traditional presence of the Church in the public sphere. This amounted to a virtual reversion of the Western Revolution, and the Pontiffs were only too well aware of this fact, as they made abundantly clear in their Encyclicals again and again. Time and again this thoroughly antimodern undercurrent reveals itself in seemingly progressive Papal utterances. *Rerum Novarum*, for instance, did call attention to social injustices, but blamed these principally on the abandonment of 'Christian religion and Christian institutions'. Although the Pope did encourage the organisation of workmen, he emphasized that this organisation should be, above anything else, a *Catholic* organisation. In fact, Catholic criticism of modern social conditions was to a great extent the domain of radical ultramontanes, for whom it formed part of their broader rejection of the new political and social order. The solution they proposed for the ills of modern society was corporatism, a social doctrine that envisaged a return to the guild system from an idealised medieval past and a corresponding revival of an idealised hierarchical community.

In the same manner, the de facto acceptance of the French Republic by the Papacy did not mean that it accepted what the Republic stood for. Instead of striving for the restoration of a Bourbon king, the Catholic Church would now strive for recognition of the 'règne social du Christ' (as it was often expressed in sermons or contemporary publications). This sounded deceptively progressive: but what was meant with this concept was in fact the reign of Christ *over* society. The restitution of 'Christ as King of France' would herald the establishment of a political order that accepted directions from the Church and the retraction of Revolutionary achievements like freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and non-confessional public education. What the *ralliement* did signify, however, was a radical confirmation of the Papacy's change in outlook regarding the means by which this could be accomplished. The main thrust of the Catholic political effort would henceforth be directed at recatholisation of the public sphere by deploying the Catholic masses to attain political influence via the channels of democracy. Leo XIII, in other words, hoped to destroy democracy by using its means, to revert the Western Revolution by adopting her methods. Things would not go quite the way he imagined: the growing entanglement of Catholics in the mechanics of modern

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[1389] Cf. Sedgwick, *The Ralliement in French Politics*.

[1390] Duffy, *Saints and Sinners*, 244. We may safely assume that the Pope was primarily thinking of his own monarchical status when making this last remark.

[1391] Vincent Viaene, ''Wagging the dog': An Introduction to Vatican Press policy in an Age of Democracy and Imperialism', in *The Papacy and the New World Order: Vatican Diplomacy, Catholic Opninion and International Politics at the Time of Leo XIII, 1878-1903 = La Papauté et le nouvel ordre mondial: Diplomatie vaticane, opinion catholique et politique internationale au temps de Léo XIII*, ed. by Vincent Viaene (Bruxelles: Institut Historique Belge de Rome/Belgisch Historisch Instituut te Rome, 2005), 323-348, esp. 329.

politics would eventually bring forth a Catholic political movement that became increasingly committed to the tenets of Western democracy. But that is another story.

Freemasonry retained its by now traditional role in all this: as a representative *par excellence* of the Western Revolution, standing for secularisation in all its various manifestations. This role had not become obsolete in the new era of mass mobilisation and mass communication: on the contrary, it had become more important than ever. As one historian has aptly remarked, the struggle over secularisation was in many respects a 'war of symbols' that translated an almost abstract long-term development involving complex sociological and cultural processes into terms that could be grasped by the masses.[1392] The rhetorical barrage against the 'encroachments' of Freemasonry was a prime example of this kind of symbolic warfare. Identifying an enemy made things clear and simple. To a great extent, the anticlerical enemy was employing its image of the Christian church in the same manner; and the ideological pressure this helped to build up would unleash itself bloodily against both clergy and believers in later European revolutions.

It is remarkable to see how, in contemporary Catholic publications, the struggle against Freemasonry was tied up with the exertions to build up a modern organisation of mass mobilisation. Apart from prayer and the above-mentioned deployment of the Third Order of Saint Francis, the recommendations in *Humanum Genus* to combat freemasonry encompass all the main features of Catholic organisation: propaganda, especially by way of the 'Good Press' (included by implication in the Pontiff's appeal to 'those among the laity in whom a love of religion and of country is joined to learning and goodness of life' to assist the episcopate in unmasking Freemasonry); corporate organisation for workmen ('for the protection, under the guidance of religion, both of their temporal interests and of their morality'); and, last but not least, Catholic education for the young.[1393] Monsabre echoed these words in his speech in Clermond-Ferrand a decade later, particularly emphasizing the work of a Catholic Press that was always and everywhere on its guard to expose 'the hypocrite sectarians and the sinister exploiters of the passions of the multitude'.[1394] It was only the incorporation of the Catholic faithful of all ages and social strata in the Catholic hierarchical and organisational framework that could protect them against an all but invisible enemy that was waging total war against Christian truth.

From the distant vantage point of the historian, it is not hard to see that in reality, it was probably as much the other way around. The danger of Freemasonry gave urgency and legitimacy to the Catholic organisational effort and served to keep Catholic opinion in a state of constant mobilisation. It also served as a handy pretext to keep the ranks of the faithful closed. This explains why Catholic antimasonic agitation was not alleviated after the *ralliement* was launched, but only became more intense. There was a need for a common enemy to reunite a French Catholicism that was hopelessly divided and, in part, utterly dismayed at the sudden turnabout of its hierarchical leaders.[1395] In this specific case, the effort to use the Masonic fraud as a unifying factor failed; and in this Taxil played a (presumably unwitting) part, as we will see later on. Yet in general, the cold war against Freemasonry proved an excellent instrument to give the rank and file of the Ecclesia militans a sense of unity and purpose. The importance of this factor sometimes shimmered through the texts of

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[1392] 'Guerre de positions autour de plusieurs thèmes symboliques' is how Jan De Maeyer describes the secularisation conflict in Belgium; cf. his article 'La Belgique. Un élève modèle de l'école ultramontaine,' in *The Black International/L'International noire 1870-1878*, ed. Emiel Lamberts (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 360-385, there 365.

[1393] Pope Leo XIII, *Humanum Genus*, sections 33-36, retrieved from www.vatican.va.

[1394] Monsabre, *La Croisade au XIX^e siècle*, 29-30.

[1395] Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 203-204.

official declarations. In *Inimica vis* ('The enemy forces'), for instance, an Encyclical from 8 December 1892 in which the bishops of Italy were exhorted to remain firm in their war against Freemasonry, Leo XIII stated significantly that 'there can be no middle ground' for those who fought to repel the attack on religion. 'Therefore, in the case of the weak and sluggish, courage must be stirred up through your efforts; in the case of the strong, it must be kept active; with all trace of dissent wiped out, under your leadership and command, the result will be that all alike, with united minds and common discipline, may undertake the battle in a spiritual manner.'[1396]

hidden temples, secret grottos, and international men of mystery[1397]

Another feature of the work of Taxil and his mouthpieces that stands out in retrospective is the vast international scope of his constructions. With 'international scope', I do not refer primarily to his descriptions of Palladic headquarters in the South Carolina or Satanic rituals in India, all of which clearly belong to the realm of fancy, but rather to the publicity offensive against real-life European politicians he deployed in both his books and the often extensive newspaper controversies that he fed, predominantly in the Catholic press. In Germany, as we have already seen, the *Kulturkampf* was denounced as a manoeuvre of Palladism, and Bismarck as a willing pawn of demonic forces. In Belgium, the prominent liberal politician and Masonic Grand Master Goblet d'Alviella was a special target of the books and articles of Domenico Margiotta, in which he was branded as a convinced Palladist.[1398] Antimasonic agitation was indeed instrumental in preventing his re-election as member of Belgian parliament.[1399]

It was Italy, however, that played the leading role in these ventures into European politics. In Bataille's *Diable au XIX^e siècle*, Palladism's foundation coincided exactly with the breach of Rome's Porta Pia by Italian troops on 20 September 1870; and the destruction of the Papacy was listed as a prime objective in Albert Pike's secret (and apocryphal) instructions to international Freemasonry. Nor can it be deemed coincidental that Italian Grand Master Adriano Lemmi was pinpointed as Pike's successor. In fact, Lemmi can be considered the principal target of many of Taxil's publications in the 1890s. In *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, Lemmi already figures as a convert to Judaism and, even more surprisingly, as the second identity assumed by the Marseillais Revolutionary Gaston Crémieux, who was presumed to have been executed after the Commune of 1870.[1400] No mention is made of this story in Margiotta's first book, but in other respects the work, which is entirely devoted to the Italian Grand Master, represents a crescendo in the offensive against Lemmi. The allegations vented by Margiotta are not all in the realm of comical fantasy, but include disclosures about Lemmi's supposed apprehension fifteen years previously for theft and swindle in Marseille – including a photographic reproduction of his judicial file – and a detailed discussion of his

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[1396] Pope Leo XIII, *Inimica Vis*, section 9, retrieved from www.vatican.va.

[1397] On the Roman Temple of Satan and possible connections between Taxil and semi-covert Vatican press operations, no substantially scholarly research has yet been done. The story of the Grotto of Pertuis is explored in the articles by Francis Python and George Andrey in *La Franc-maçonnerie à Fribourg et en Suisse du XVIII^e au XX^e siècle*, ed. Yvonne Lehnherr (Gèneve: Slatkine & Fribourg: Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, 2001), both excellent, yet scarcely providing more than a starting point for in-depth study. In this section hopes, I hope to provide some additional historical clues and hypotheses, in anticipation of a more through historical reconstruction.

[1398] Margiotta, *Le Palladisme*, 243; he was echoed by De la Rive, who called Goblet d'Alviella a 'Satanist patriarch'; cf. A. de la Rive, 'Mensonges & menaces maçonniques,' *L'Écho de Rome: Organe de la défense du Saint-Siège* 27 (1 October 1894): 1.

[1399] On Goblet d'Alviella, see Marc D'Hoore, 'Goblet d'Alviella, un intellectuel en politique: Commentaires sur son œuvre et sa pensée,' in *Eugène Goblet d'Alviella, historien et franc-maçon,* ed. Alain Dierkens. Problèmes d'histoire des Religions 4 (Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1995), 19-34.

[1400] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:436-438; 2:350-391.

involvement in illegal tobacco import, which had given rise to something of a scandal in the Italian political arena just at that moment. 'If I was not born Italian, I would have liked to be a Prussian,' Margiotta (falsely) quotes Lemmi, 'There are two things I hate with all my heart: God and France.'[1401] Nothing could be more damning for Margiotta's French Catholic readership. Other prominent representatives of the new Italy also receive bad press in the Taxilian corpus: Mazzini and Garibaldi feature, of course, as founding fathers of Italian Masonic Satanism; Giambattista Pessina, the Grand Hierophant of the Rite of Memphis and Misraim in Italy, is depicted as a sorcerer sporting a familiar demon with the peculiar name of Beffabuc; and the Italian Prime Minister Crispi also ranks as member and thrall of Palladic Satanism.[1402]

The campaign against Lemmi found a sort of culmination in the story about the secret Palladic temple in the Palazzo Borghese: a story which had such a tenacious afterlife that it can virtually be called a legend. Its immediate instigation was provided by the transference of the Italian Grand Orient to the first floor of the splendid palace of the Borghese family in Rome. In his first book on Lemmi, Margiotta already provided some picturesque details about the changes the Grand Master had made to interior decoration of the palace. 'He ordered the latrines of the Supreme Council to be constructed above the private chapel, directing the discharge of the excrements to the altar itself. This furnishes abundant proof of his loathsome soul: for to commit this abomination, he was obliged to stink out the place. Protests followed, and for hygienic reasons, the architect had to choose another disposition of the latrines. But Lemmi then imagined something new: he gave order to place a crucifix in the water closets, with its head downwards; and on it was pasted, by his command, a sign saying: *Before you leave, spit on the traitor. Glory to Satan!*'[1403] In 1895, the Borghese family ended the lease of the Palazzo to the Italian Freemasons, and soon after the Grand Orient had evacuated the building, wild rumours started to circulate. On 15 May 1895, Margiotta telegraphed to the Catholic daily *Croix du Dauphiné* that the agents of the Borghese house 'had discovered, in a room which *was categorically refused to be opened to them*, a *Palladic temple* where a **horrible statue of Satan** was sitting enthroned on an altar, surrounded by other horrible and monstrous figurines and symbols.' The breaking news, which had been placed in an inconspicuous place in the newspaper 'due to a typographical error', was reproduced on the front page the following day, under the headline 'Temple of Satan'.[1404] On 18 May, Margiotta returned with some more details.[1405] By then, other Catholic newspapers had also commented on the discovery of 'Lemmi's Temple of Satan', quoting Italian sources.[1406] Of course, Taxil's *Revue mensuelle religieuse, politique, scientifique* ('Complement to the publication *Le Diable au XIXe Siècle*') followed suit in its May number, quoting the story from the Italian Catholic newspaper *Unione* from Bologna of 15 May, which in its turn gave as its source the 'accredited correspondent in Rome' of another Catholic newspaper, the *Corriere Nazionale* from Turin. In its main points, this report was identical to that of Margiotta, telling also how the plenipotentiaries of the Borghese prince had inspected the palace and had been freely admitted to all rooms except one, that was only opened to them after they threatened to call in the assistance of the police. 'In this hall,' the report continued, 'there was a temple named

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[1401] Margiotta, *Adriano Lemmi*, 316, and title page.

[1402] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle*, 1:466; Margiotta, *Le Palladisme*, 120-127, 135-175; Vaughan, *Crispi*. On Pessina, see also Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 173.

[1403] Margiotta, *Adriano Lemmi*, 250. Introvigne, *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 160n, seems to describe the presence of a depiction of Lucifer in the lodge as an authentic fact.

[1404] 'Le Temple de Satan,' *La Croix du Dauphiné* 3 (16 May 1895) 709:1.

[1405] Domenico Margiotta, 'Le Temple de Satan à Rome,' *La Croix du Dauphiné* 3 (18 May 1895) 711:1; the article from *La Croix* was reproduced in Margiotta, *Le Palladisme*, 31-34.

[1406] Cf. 'Le Temple Palladique du Palais Borghese,' *Revue mensuelle religieuse, politique, scientifique: Complément de la publication Le Diable au XIXe Siècle* 2 (May 1895) 17:300-306, there 301.

thus: **Palladic Temple**. And here is its description: The walls, adorned with damask of red and black silk, displayed in the back of the room a huge tapestry, on which stood out, in colossal form, the effigy of Lucifer; very close by, a sort of altar or burner was placed. Strewn around here and there, one could still remark the triangles, the angle brackets, and the other symbols of the satanic sect, as well as their books and rituals. Everywhere around magnificent gilded seats were placed, all having up in their back a kind of big transparent eye lighted by electricity. Finally, in the midst of this vile temple, there was something resembling a throne. The horrified visitors took good care, in view of the mental state this unexpected sight brought them in, not to remain any longer in this place where, evidently, a abominable cult was rendered to the demon; so they did not examine the interior in detail. They left the room with as much haste as they could.'[1407] This story circulated in roughly similar wording through the Catholic press, betraying a single source that may indeed have been Italian; Margiotta, evidently not trusting in the power of suggestion, added that the throne in the middle of the room had been that of the 'Satanist Grand Pontiff' Adriano Lemmi, who had thus been officiating as high priest of Satan practically in front of the Saint Peter itself.[1408]

The Temple of Lucifer inside the Borghese Palazzo was just one of the many lesser stories on the fringes of the great Palladism Hoax. Another of these stories that is simply too good not to tell is that of Miss Lucie Claraz, the High Priestess of Lucifer in Fribourg, Switzerland. That Fribourg had to be the scene of this tale was probably not entirely coincidental. The Swiss town was the epicentre of Catholic organisation in francophone Switzerland; and as such, it was also a place where the secularisation struggle and the Swiss *Kulturkampf* were most keenly felt. The Masonic presence in this regional Catholic capital was spurious. In 1848, a Lodge called 'La Régénérée' had been founded, but this had floundered into virtual oblivion after a few decades.[1409] In the 1860s, only a few disorganised Masons were left, when the barrister, journalist, and newspaper editor Ernest Stoecklin initiated a renewal of the local lodge. Stoecklin had been involved in the revolutions of 1848, had turned conservative for a while, and then turned radical again. Anticlerical motives were surely involved in his initiative, which must be situated against the background of the Swiss Kulturkampf and the backlash that was engendered by the growing Catholic influence in the Fribourg area.[1410] In addition, Stoecklin seems to have had a notable inclination for the romantic, or at least the picturesque, for he choose as location for the renewed Lodge the grotto of Pertuis, a cavern in a granite cliff situated on the outskirts of Fribourg and used as a public bath in the Middle Ages. [1411] Works to make the place suitable for Masonic ritual commenced in 1877.
The battle lines of ideological strife in this time sometimes ran right through families. This at least was the case in Ernest Stoecklin's family. His sister Julie was a Sister of the ultra-Catholic Congregation of Saint Paul; his wife Marie Claraz was also a devout Catholic.[1412] His wife's brother had been superficially involved in Freemasonry, but her sister, Lucie Claraz, more than matched the other female family members in Catholic activism. To redress her brother-in-law's unchristian activities, or maybe her own trespassing in younger days, she

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[1407] 'Le Temple Palladique du Palais Borghese,' 300-301.
[1408] Margiotta, *Le Palladisme*, 34n.
[1409] See Jean-Daniel Dessonaz, 'Les débuts de la Juste et Parfaite Loge de Saint-Jean 'La Régénérée' à l'Orient de Fribourg (1848-1851),' in *La Franc-maçonnerie à Fribourg et en Suisse du XVIII^e au XX^e siècle*, ed. Yvonne Lehnherr (Gèneve: Slatkine & Fribourg: Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, 2001), 141-152.
[1410] Francis Python, 'Diable, les Franc-Maçons sont de retour! 1877-1903,' in *La Franc-maçonnerie à Fribourg et en Suisse du XVIII^e au XX^e siècle*, ed. Yvonne Lehnherr (Gèneve: Slatkine & Fribourg: Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, 2001), 153-175, esp. 154-155.
[1411] Cf. http://www.pertuis.ch/fr/history_f.html, accessed 13 November 2010.
[1412] Python, 'Diable, les Franc-Maçons sont de retour!', 154-155; Léon Barbey, *L'âme du Chanoine Schorderet* (Fribourg: Éditions de l'Imprimerie St-Paul, 1943), 149.

had founded a Catholic 'Work' that sought to obtain the cave of Pertuis, in order to transform it into a expiatory chapel for the 'Fraternity of the Union in Jesus-Maria of the Servants of the Holy Family'.[1413] The chance to obtain victory in this intrafamilial war of religion came unexpectedly when Stoecklin ran into money trouble because his Mason brethren proved reluctant to finance his extravagant building schemes. Lucie succeeded in obtaining the support of the internationally famous missionary bishop of Geneva, Monsignor Mermillod, and flooded Catholic France, Belgium, and Italy with leaflets aiming to muster financial support.[1414] On 16 March 1885, the Paris-based Catholic periodical *Le Pèlerin* broke the news that, by the grace of God, the temple had been 'snatched from the Demon' and sold to the Congregation of the Holy Family.[1415] The Grotto was transformed into a chapel, with a triumphal statue of Saint Michael subduing the Dragon at the entrance.[1416]

It is not clear when Satanism precisely entered the Fribourg story. Was it already with *Le Pèlerin*'s mention of the 'temple snatched from the Demon', just half a year after *Humanum Genus*? Or had this just been metaphor? There is some suggestion that the Catholics who visited the Lodge directly after its dismantling were already extraordinarily impressed by 'the peculiarities of the place'.[1417] Among these Catholics, the chaplain Joseph Schorderet (1845-1893), a charismatic priest who was very active in Catholic organisations in Fribourg and beyond, is mentioned by name. We know he was acquainted with Lucie Claraz, that he was not particularly well-inclined towards Freemasons, and that he corresponded with Léo Taxil.[1418] The latter, in his final declaration on 12 April 1897, gave a highly satirical description of a 'good chaplain from Fribourg' in which we can without much doubt recognize Joseph Schorderet. According to Taxil, one fine day the Swiss ecclesiastical burst into his quarters 'like a bomb', hailing him as a saint and demanding a miracle. When Taxil politely refused, the chaplain went back to Fribourg, convinced that the great convert had abstained from miracles out of humility; from Switzerland, he sent Taxil an enormous Gruyere cheese engraved with pious inscriptions.[1419] There is also some indication that the French Antimasonic Committee had been actively involved in the affair of the grotto – yet another group of people who were prepared to believe the worst about Freemasons.[1420] In one way or another, the rumour surfaced that *black Masses* had been held in Fribourg's Masonic cave. It is hardly necessary to add that these rumours had no foundation whatsoever in facts. Except for its picturesque location, there is nothing to suggest that there was anything out of the ordinary about the Fribourg Lodge. A short work on Masonic ritual that Stoecklin published in 1882 only attests that he was a dedicated follower of the nineteenth century 'cult of Humanity', which he considered to be the essence of Freemasonry. In an aside on the initials INRI (also used in Masonic ritual and iconography), he even regretted the new significance of 'Igne natura renovatur integra' that had been given to this acronym by some Lodges. Instead, Stoecklin defended the old meaning of 'Iesus nazarenus rex Iudæorum' – for had not Jesus been the first to realise a devotion to Humanity as a whole?[1421]

[1413] Jean-Pierrre Laurant, 'Le dossier Léo Taxil du fonds Jean Baylot de la Bibliothèque Nationale,' *Politica Hermetica* 4 (1990): 66-67, there 61.

[1414] Rive, *La Femme et l'Enfant dans franc-maçonnerie*, 678.

[1415] Python, 'Diable, les Franc-Maçons sont de retour!' 161.

[1416] See the picture of the chapel in Python, 'Diable, les Franc-Maçons sont de retour!' 162.

[1417] Rive, *La Femme et l'Enfant dans franc-maçonnerie*, 676.

[1418] Python, 'Diable, les Franc-Maçons sont de retour!' 161-162; Georges Andrey, 'La Croisade antimaçonnique (XIXe-XXe sicècles),' in *La Franc-maçonnerie à Fribourg et en Suisse du XVIII^e^ au XX^e^ siècle*, ed. Yvonne Lehnherr (Gèneve: Slatkine & Fribourg: Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, 2001), 177-186, 183.

[1419] Taxil in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 166.

[1420] Python, 'Diable, les Franc-Maçons sont de retour!' 161.

[1421] E. Stoecklin, *Instructions au 18me grade* (Fribourg: Souv ∴ Chapitre L'Amitié de Lausanne, 1882), 80-81; see also p. 3.

Joseph Schorderet died in 1893, increasingly paranoid about Freemasonry and convinced that Masonic assassins were after his life.[1422] After his death, the story of the Satanist grotto took an unexpected twist. Suspicions suddenly came to fall on devout Miss Claraz. Her pious activities were only a cover-up, it was said, to hide the fact that she secretly participated in the Satanist rituals of her brother-in-law. Occasion for this rumour may have been given by the fact that the curate of nearby Gruyere had refused her communion – although this happened, it seems, because of some wild saturnalia Miss Claraz had grown in her garden in a moment of slackened devotion.[1423] In addition, it was said that her takeover of the Masonic grotto had been a sham, and that the money she had raised with her religious foundation had in reality been used to pay off her brother-in-law's debts.

An appearance on the scene was then made by none other than the writer J.-K. Huysmans, recently converted and widely considered an expert on the occult by the media. It is he who first seems to have made the connection between the refusal of communion and the presumed activities of Lucie Claraz as a Satanist Priestess. He did so in an interview that was printed in both *La Semaine de Fribourg* and *Le Matin*, stating that his information was based on an eyewitness account.[1424] Like so much in this affair, it is unclear how the former Decadent writer managed to become mixed up in the story; neither the literature on Huysmans, nor the historiographic references to Lucie Claraz offer any clarification on this point.

In the wake of Huysmans, the Catholic journalist Abel Clarin de la Rive appeared on the scene. We have met this character as a faithful echo of Taxil, and there is a strong possibility Léo Taxil also gave him the cue on Claraz: but Clarin de la Rive evidently went on to make the story his personal project.[1425] In February 1894, he published an article entitled 'The Black Mass at Fribourg' in Taxil's *Revue mensuelle religieuse, politique, scientifique*.[1426] Dark ceremonies had taken place in the grotto, the article claimed, as well as in the orchard that lay before it, where prefatory rites had taken place involving naked Masonic Sisters. The actual black Mass was celebrated in the grotto itself, using specially prepared black hosts, while at the same time, consecrated hosts were abused and 'Luciferian psalms and hymns' intoned to the accompaniment of a harmonium. Clarin de la Rive mentioned Lucie Claraz by name as Grand Mistress of this infernal cult. With admirable creativity, he proceeded to counter the objections raised against his thesis. There were no altars and no Baphomet statue in the grotto when the Freemasons had evacuated it? Evidently, they had first removed the evidence of their secret cult… The neighbours did not recall seeing any women entering the premises? Quite possible: for could the women not have entered by way of a secret tunnel from the nearby tavern, a local establishment considered 'of ill repute from a moral point of view'?[1427]

Clarin de La Rive's article did not go unnoticed. It was taken over by the *Nouveau Moniteur de Rome*, Pope Leo XII's international news organ that was headed by the fierce Monsignor Bœglin. In an editorial, the periodical lauded the firm stand of the local curate. He had steadfastly refused the Body of Christ to a woman who planned to abuse it in deicidal rites, even when she had made appeal to secular courts to exact the administration of the hallowed

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[1422] Andrey, 'La Croisade antimaçonnique,' 183.

[1423] Rive, *La Femme et l'Enfant dans la franc-maçonnerie*, 678.

[1424] Laurant, 'Le dossier Léo Taxil,' 61; 'Les Sacrilèges Maçonniques,' *Le Nouveau Moniteur de Rome*, 1:125 (20 June 1894).

[1425] For contacts between Taxil and De la Rive regarding Fribourg, see Laurant, 'Le dossier Léo Taxil,' 61.

[1426] A.C. de la Rive, 'La Messe Noire au Fribourg,' *Revue mensuelle religieuse, politique, scientifique. Complément de la publication Le Diable au XIXe Siècle* 1 (February 1894) 2:43-45. De la Rive republished the text of this article in *La Femme et l'Enfant dans franc-maçonnerie*, 674-679, replacing the name Lucie Claraz with 'M^{lle}. X.'.

[1427] Rive, *La Femme et l'Enfant dans la franc-maçonnerie*, 679. De la Rive was clearly fond of secret subterranean constructions; on pp. 693-694, he also gives detailed information on Masonic tunnels elsewhere in Swiss.

bread. In reality, according to the *Moniteur*, her secret design in this had been to 'legalize by judicial precedent the right to celebrate sacrilegious Communion'.[1428] Another person who was alerted was Lucie Claraz herself, whose first name and surname had been mentioned in De la Rive's article. She sent an angry letter to the *Revue mensuelle*, demanding instant rectification. This only served to increase Clarin de la Rive's conviction. When he saw that the exasperated woman had signed her letter with 'Lucie', he read this as short for Deodata-Lucif, her religious name as high priestess of Lucifer.[1429] Lucie Claraz then decided to sue the *Revue*'s publisher for infamy. The French and foreign tabloid press, already warmed by Huysmans' interview, now leaped to the story, repeatedly comparing the Fribourg grotto to the subterranean temple of Albert de Rudolstadt in George Sand's *Consuelo*, and looking forward with great relish to the 'curious details' and 'extraordinary aberrations of religious sentiment' regarding Luciferians and Satanists that would be unveiled by the process. Had Catholic Fribourg been the scene of Luciferian ceremonies? Was Lucie Claraz, who looked 'more fit to be the servant of a curate', in reality a priestess of Lucifer, officiating at the orgiastic rites of the 'God of Joy and Pleasure'?[1430]
The Paris court sat on 15 January 1896. Lucie Claraz entered the courtroom dressed in the full regalia of the Knighthood of the Holy Sepulchre; her lawyer demanded 5,000 francs indemnity.[1431] The counsel for the defence argued, surprisingly, that it was an evident absurdity to admit to the actual occurrence of devil-worship, and that to accuse a person of an impossible offence could hardly be called libel.[1432] But the judge thought otherwise and condemned the *Revue* to a 100 franc fine and required it to provide an official rectification for putting a stain on the plaintiff's honour as a woman and Catholic.[1433] Bœglin and the *Nouveau Moniteur de Rome*, against whom Claraz had also pressed charges, were less lucky. The Italians had already expulsed the troublesome ecclesiastic some time before. They profited from the opportunity the trial gave them to make sure he would stay away for good, sentencing him to two years of prison *in absentio* and the payment of an 8,000 francs indemnity.[1434] (The grotto, meanwhile, had been turned into a convent for the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, who would maintain their presence there until 1973. Today, it is a cultural centre featuring expositions and electronic music concerts.[1435])

The sheer scope and the enormous volume of Taxil's corpus have led some historians to suppose that greater forces were at work in the shadows behind him. The Italian expert on Satanism Massimo Introvigne does not think it unlikely that a small group of freethinkers or even Freemasons was secretly supporting Taxil's operation.[1436] He also considers 'not improbable' the thesis of his fellow-Italian Aldo Mola, a renowned expert on the history of Italian Freemasonry, who suspects the hand of the French secret services in some of Taxil's schemes, particularly those involving the Italian 'Grand Master' Domenico Margiotta.[1437]

[1428] 'Les Sacrilèges Maçonniques,' *Le Nouveau Moniteur de Rome*, 1 (20 June 1894) 125.
[1429] Laurant, 'Le dossier Léo Taxil,' 61.
[1430] Lillie, *The Worship of Satan in Modern France*, xix-xxi, quoting from the *London Globe* of 30 April 1895.
[1431] Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 199.
[1432] Lillie, *The Worship of Satan in Modern France*, xxi.
[1433] 'Copie du Jugement,' *Revue mensuelle religieuse, politique, scientifique* 3 (May 1896) 29:297-298. Typically, this verdict was immediately interpreted by some of Taxil's supporters as judicial proof for the existence of Luciferianism – evidently, the judge had *not* considered devil worship to be non-existent? Cf. Lillie, *The Worship of Satan in Modern France*, xxi.
[1434] Vaughan, *Crispi*, 448-451n; Maillard de Broys, 'Échos de Rome,' *L'Écho de Rome: Organe de la défense du Saint-Siège* 27 (1 November 1894): 1-2.
[1435] Cf. http://www.pertuis.ch/fr/history_f.html, accessed 13 November 2010.
[1436] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 207.
[1437] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 180, 203, basing himself on Aldo A. Mola. 'Il Diavolo in loggia,' in *Diavolo, Diavoli. Torino e altrove*, ed. Filippo Barbano (Milan: Bompiani, 1988), 257-270, an article I

Their aim in this would have been to influence Italian public opinion, with the ultimate intention of toppling Italian Prime Minister Crispi and breaking up the Triple Entente between Italy, Germany, and the Habsburg Empire. Mingled with grotesque fantasies of diabolism, politically explosive documents had indeed appeared in the pages of Margiotta's books. What to think, for instance, of the photographically reproduced condemnation of young Adriano Lemmi for theft and financial malversation in Marseille? It is as yet unclear how this ended up in the hands of Taxil or Margiotta – the latter claimed to have received it from the hands of Diana Vaughan![1438] Taxil, moreover, is known to have occasionally informed on his co-revolutionaries to the French police during his freethinking days.[1439]
Hard evidence for the presumed involvement of government agencies in the Taxil fraud, or part of it, can only be given when hitherto undisclosed documents come to light. But I personally hold the hypothesis to be improbable. Eugen Weber, who utilized police archives for his work on Taxil, does not seem to have come across any indications pointing in this direction. Margiotta's book on Lemmi, moreover, was not primarily intended for an Italian readership – its Italian translation was only published after the French version, and was probably intended primarily to boost Margiotta's plausibility with the French public (with the additional effect of extracting some extra revenue from the Italian market). We have already seen that Margiotta was in reality a pawn of Taxil (at least, this is what they both declared), so to assume covert secret service manipulations behind Margiotta is to assume the same behind Léo Taxil. It is hard to imagine that the French *Sureté* would set up an infiltration operation lasting twelve years and causing considerable damage to the nation's political cohesion in the meantime. This argument has double force when it comes to a possible Masonic involvement in Taxil's operations. The sheer bulk of Taxil's output – final point – ought not to surprise us unduly. Taxil had always been a prolific writer; he had been publishing about Freemasonry for some five years already; and much of his work, as we have seen, consisted of rehashed excerpts of old stories, Masonic manuals, and previous antimasonic literature. He was also a master in the art of multiple usage of texts, publishing them first as magazine or newspaper articles, then reassembling them in his books, and subsequently quoting them once more in the books of his other persona. While his output certainly was impressive, there is nothing ipso facto impossible in the idea that Taxil could have accounted for it more or less single-handedly, with the help of an occasional Dr. Hacks or Margiotta, as well as an able typist with modern office equipment.[1440]

If one would wish to uncover hidden operators behind Taxil's antimasonic activities, I think it would be much more fruitful to search for them in quite another direction. A wealth of indications but a dearth of serious research exists concerning the possibility of a systematic Roman Catholic involvement in Taxil's antimasonic campaign. And with systematic involvement, I do not refer merely to the obvious cooperation of Catholic antimasonic organisations. I mean the possibility that Taxil was covertly provided with funds and/or information and/or instructions by ultramontane, possibly even Vatican, agencies.

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unfortunately was unable to consult.

[1438] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 180; Mola, 'La Ligue antimaçonnique,' 46.

[1439] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 169.

[1440] Alfred Pierret, Diana Vaughan's publisher, remembered two other collaborators visiting him on behalf of Taxil; a well-dressed man in his forties who called himself Daniel Svelti, and a young woman who called herself Dorothy Lindlay and who regularly delivered messages from 'Diana', as well as the zinc printing moulds for the demonic signatures used in Vaughan's Luciferian bulletin. As to office equipment, Pierret consulted some experts regarding the typoscripts he received for Diana Vaughan's publications; all assured him the texts were produced on a extremely modern machine still unavailable in France. See *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste Parfaite Initiée, Indépendante* 2 (5 May 1897) 23:706-708, 712, 717.

To make this suggestion credible, a small excursion into the back alleys of Vatican history might be useful. As we have seen, the loss of temporal sovereignty in 1870 brought about a shift in Vatican policy, which henceforth increasingly relied on the manipulation of Catholic opinion to support its international politics. Recent historical research has brought to light that the Papacy did not shrink from using covert channels for the surreptitious direction of Catholic opinion. Directly after the taking of Rome, an international group of ultramontane aristocrats and notables spontaneously sprang into being in order to organise an efficient Catholic reaction to the crisis. Styling itself the 'Black International' (in conscious emulation of the Communist International), the group had put itself at the unconditional disposal of the Papacy; and a secret liaison had been established with Pius IX by way of the 'innominato', a high-ranking ecclesiastical who had direct access to the Pope but whose identity was to remain secret. While the group initially prepared for armed resistance (setting up secret weapon stockpiles and organising clandestine networks of ex-zouaves), the Papacy used it primarily as a tool for the manipulation of the Catholic Press.[1441] In 1872, the Vatican took over the funding of the organisation, ensuring its control over the operation. By way of the innominato, articles and drafts for articles approved or even written by the Pius IX were sent to the central bureau of the Black International in Geneva. From here, they were sent on as handwritten briefings known as 'Conference de Genève' to the permanent members of the Black International in various Catholic countries, who in turn distributed them to Catholic press organs and key Catholic opinion makers. In this way, informal Papal instructions could be transmitted to the Press, especially regarding the Roman Question; at the same time, the Permanents served as a kind of intelligence officers to the papacy, reporting on the political and ecclesiastical situation in their homeland. Secrecy was an essential ingredient of the whole operation. Thus, its deniability was guaranteed: and in this way, the Black International served not only as a tool for propaganda, but also as a tool for diplomacy. Through the Geneva channel, the Pope was able to fan up indignation in the Catholic press to intimidate European governments, while simultaneously extending an open hand through diplomatic channels. When the desired concessions had been obtained, the Catholic press could be instructed to cool down in the same way.[1442]

Leo XIII was even more passionate about the press than Pius IX; it was even rumoured that he personally wrote articles for the *Osservatore Romano* on occasion.[1443] But he also preferred to keep press policy in his own hands and those of his confidents, employing a range of Vatican newspapers to play the organ of Catholic opinion. The Black International was rather abruptly disbanded when their Vatican Mr. X (a Polish prelate named Wladimir Czacki) was promoted to a different position within the papal hierarchy. This did not mean the end of covert papal press activities, however. In June 1878, a secret *Ufficio stampa* was established, doing much the same as the Black International had done, and with much of the same people too; virtually all former Black International Permanents functioned as its correspondents. The *Ufficio* was so secret that even most of the Cardinals were not aware of its existence; those who knew about it mostly refereed to it as the 'House Salmini', one of the cover addresses the agency used. After 1881, the Ufficio came under the responsibility of the Secretary of State, Cardinal Rampolla; renamed 'Cassa di stampa', it assumed a more modest role, mainly supplying

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[1441] Viaene, 'The Roman Question,' 169; for the history of the Black International, see especially Emiel Lamberts, 'L'internationale noire. Une organisation secrète au service du Saint-Siège,' in *The Black International/L'International noire 1870-1878*, ed. Emiel Lamberts (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 15-101; Jacques Lory, 'La 'Correspondance de Gèneve' (1870-1873): Un organe de presse singulier,' ibidem, 102-131, and the other contributions to this volume. Emiel Lamberts has published a monograph in Dutch which is largely devoted to the Black International: *Het gevecht met Leviathan: Een verhaal over de politieke ordening in Europa 1815-1965* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2011) – this publication, however, has eluded me.

[1442] Viaene, 'A Brilliant Failure,' 246.

[1443] Viaene, ''Wagging the dog',' 323.

handouts to Italian newspapers and journalists. At the same time, Leo XIII relied more heavily on local bishops and papal nuncios to direct Europe's Catholic press.[1444]

This brings us right up to the time that Taxil started to divulge his revelations on Freemasonry. How does he fit into this picture? There are some suggestive facts that might enable us to sketch the outlines of a hypothesis.
First, directly after his so-called conversion, a few potentially significant personages were involved in setting Taxil up as an antimasonic author. Among them was the papal nuncio in Paris, who did not deign to extend formal invitations to the former freethinker.[1445] Another of these highly significant personages was Joseph Schorderet, the 'good chaplain from Fribourg' that we encountered in the grotto at Pertuis. Notwithstanding the merciless ridicule Taxil heaped upon him in his memoir, Schorderet was in fact a key figure in international ultramontane Catholicism.[1446] He was part of, or at least worked in close concord with, the Black International, corresponding with several of its Permanents; he was an important organizer of Swiss counter-secularisation agitation; he was a driving force behind the establishment of Switzerland's first Catholic University, which in turn played an essential role in the so-called Union of Fribourg, an ultramontane think-tank that helped to formulate the anticapitalist corporatism of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*.[1447] Yet Schorderet's most important work was in the domain of the press. As a young priest, he had founded his own newspaper, called *Liberté*, which soon grew to be the most important Catholic newspaper of francophone Switzerland; in addition, he had established a nationwide Catholic press network. He also founded the Sisters of Saint Paul, which counted Julie Stoecklin among its members. The official name of this sisterhood was 'Congregation of Saint Paul for the Apostolate of the Press', and far from being a merely devotional order, it was a powerful tool in Schorderet's press activities. He had called the congregation into life when the workplace employees of his printing establishment had threatened to go on strike; its aim was to furnish a reliable and cheap body of young female workers to the printing presses of the Catholic Press.[1448] This proved to be a master stroke, and the work of Saint Paul gradually extended from Switzerland into France.Last but not least, relations between Taxil and Schorderet were much more intricate than Taxil's story of the elated chaplain sending him Swiss cheese might suggest.

[1444] Cf. Viaene, 'A Brilliant Failure', and Viaene, ''Wagging the dog''.
[1445] We know this because it evoked the chagrin of Drumont, who lashed out against the support that ex-pornographer Taxil was receiving from the ecclesiastical hierarchy; cf. Édouard Drumont, 'Léo Taxil et le Nonce du Pape,' in *Le Testament d'un Antisémite* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1891), 404-437. Drumont furthermore revealed that Taxil's periodicals were printed by the Catholic Œuvre de Saint-Michel (p. 434). Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 172, also acknowledges the important role of the apostolic nunciature in Taxil's early days as a Catholic author.
[1446] On Schorderet, see Urs Altermatt, 'L'engagement des intellectuels catholiques suisses au sein de l'Internationale noire,' in *The Black International/L'International noire 1870-1878*, ed. Emiel Lamberts (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 409-426, esp. 416-420. Barbey, *L'âme du Chanoine Schorderet*, is a semi-hagiography, but provides basic biographical facts. I was unfortunately unable to consult the extensive biography of Joseph Schorderet by Dominique Barthélémy, *Diffuser au lieu d'interdire: Le chanoine Joseph Schorderet (1840-1893)* (Fribourg: Editions universitaires, 1993).
[1447] Schorderet is listed as a Catholic member of the Black International by Emiel Lamberts in 'L'internationale noire,' 49; in 'Conclusion: The Black International and its Influence on European Catholicism (1870-1878),' in *The Black International/L'International noire 1870-1878*, ed. Emiel Lamberts (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 464-480, there 475, Lamberts says he operated 'in close concert' with the Black International. Altermatt, 'L'engagement des intellectuels catholiques suisses,' 424, writes that the Swiss priest worked 'de façon largement indépendante, mais du même esprit que le Comité international'. Be this as it may, Schorderet was without doubt in regular correspondence with several Black International Permanents, among whom the Dutch Permanent Cramer (Lamberts 'L'internationale noire,' 77-78); his national press agency was formed precisely at the time that the Black International came into being.
[1448] Barbey, *L'âme du Chanoine Schorderet*, 139-168.

Right after his 'conversion', and still deep in debt, Taxil had held a job at the Librarie Saint-Paul, the Paris bookshop of Schorderet's Congregation.[1449] In a way, it may not be far off the mark to say that Schorderet's Apostolate of the Press had paid Taxil to write his first book against Freemasonry.

Second, if we look at the *reception* of Taxil's Palladism project, something tentatively suggesting a pattern becomes visible. Not only conservative Catholic press organs accepted Taxil's inflated revelations. Some of the most virulent criticasters of Taxil – Veuillot's *L'Univers*, Georges Bois' *Vérité*, Gruber's *Kölnischer Volkszeitung* – were radically intransigent and firmly convinced of the existence of a Masonic plot of the 'philosophical', Barruelian kind. What these Catholic newspapers all had in common was that the Vatican had failed to attain an effective grip on them. In the French case, they moreover represented an anti-ralliement stance – *La Vérité* had explicitly been founded as a voice for Catholic anti-ralliement sentiments.[1450] If we examine, on the other hand, the sections of the Catholic press that gave positive coverage to Taxil's output, we see that newspapers and periodicals closely allied to the Papacy are over-represented. This applies to the press organs linked to bishop Fava (a loyal proponent of the ralliement, surprising as it may seem); it applies to the Jesuit *Civittà Catolica*; it also applies to the *Nouveau Moniteur de Rome* of Monsignor Bœglin, set up to serve as a semi-official international press organ of the Vatican by Cardinal Rampolla.[1451] Given the things we know about Vatican press policy, this at least makes abundantly clear that there was never a whisper of disapproval regarding Taxil through the various confidential channels that the Papacy had at its disposal to brief the Catholic press. One is tempted to suppose, on the contrary, that somebody somewhere gave a slight nod of encouragement.[1452]

Third, and lastly, there is the *content* of Taxil's Palladic publications. If we look beyond the piano-playing crocodiles and demonic telephone lines, a picture emerges that perfectly complies with the objectives of Vatican policy. The *ralliement*, it might be remembered, was intended to further a pro-papal French intervention in the Roman Question, both by enabling better diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the current French government and by bringing French Catholicism into the field as a proper political force by enticing it to operate within the Republican framework. These complicated manoeuvres may have been reflected in Taxil's Palladism saga. Certainly, the secular Republic is brought under fire in a roundabout way, with the suggestion that an important part of its political elite was in fact acting as

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[1449] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 172. Even as late as 1893, Taxil seems to have held a job with the Catholic publishing house Téqui, which originated with 'l'œuvre de Saint-Michel', a similar organisation for doctrinal propaganda (cf. http://www.librairietequi.com/#PS-who-Qui-sommes-nous, accessed 20 July 2012). Taxil sent a letter to Bessonies on 9 August 1893 on paper with a letterhead of Téqui which names him (using his real name, G.-A. Jogand) as responsible for 'Administration et Régie des Annonces' and in the capacity of 'Administrateur-Gérant' for *Le Médecin de la Famille Chrétienne*, a periodical published by Téqui (Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 17; later letters do not feature this letterhead). Was this a cover-up or did Taxil make ends meet with this unglamorous occupation? Just two years earlier, it must be noted, the above-mentioned book by his alter ego Ricoux had also been published by Téqui, while Drumont also had remarked that Taxil's works were printed on the presses of 'l'œuvre de Saint-Michel' (see note 254). I have not found more information on this organisation; in fact, a thorough inventory of the printing and publishing logistics of Taxil remains a job to be done.

[1450] Viaene, ''Wagging the dog'', 339.

[1451] Viaene, ''Wagging the dog'', 343.

[1452] Legge, 'devil worship and Freemasonry,' 482, already noted 'the part played in the affair by some of the French Episcopate': 'The list of those who have given testimonials to Signor Margiotta includes nearly all the bishops who have rallied to the Republic'. Likewise, Abel Clarin de la Rve enjoyed the practical support of the archbishop of Rheims and Cardinal Benoit-Marie Langénieux, a confident of Leo XIII and a fervent antimason who called Freemasonry in a pastoral instruction from 1894 'l'église même de Satan'. De la Rive was granted access to his extensive library, but wrote to the Abbé Bessonies on 2 July 1894: 'Ne pas parlez bien entendu de la bibliothèque du Cardinal qui désire rester absolument dans l'ombre en cette affaire; mais donner à supposer que cette bibliothèque est ma propriété.' – Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 203-204 ; compare 208, 219.

unknowing pawn for a diabolical sect. But the enormous corpus of Bataille and Vaughan is conspicuously bare of personal allegations against prominent French politicians, in stark contrast with the vitriolic attacks against foreign, and especially Italian, politicians. Behind these attacks, the contours of the Roman Question are clearly visible. Is it a mere coincidence, in this respect, that the Vatican started a renewed 'all-out offensive' on the Roman Question after 1887?[1453] Or that the *ralliement* had been in operation for only two years when *Le Diable au XIX^e siècle* started to appear?

For those for whom this is all a bit too abstract, a brief look at the latest Catholic production that left the Taxil factory might suffice. It was called *Le 33^e :. Crispi: Un Palladiste Homme d'état démasqué* ('Crispi of the 33th Degree: A Palladist Politician Unmasked') and was published in June 1896. The book was clearly meant to be the third title in the series of 'Italian books' that had appeared under the name of Margiotta (and that might have been the occasion for his recruitment); but because the former 'Grand Master' had already deserted the Taxilian enterprise, the name of the non-existent and ever-compliant Diana Vaughan was put upon the cover. Sure enough, the book contains many new revelations on the perfidious nature of Palladism. Who would want to miss, for instance, the official Masonic charter in which the demon Bitru solemnly vouches to make Sophie 'Sapho' Walder the grandmother of Antechrist, signed by the demon himself, and countersigned by Crispi and the ubiquitous Adriano Lemmi?[1454] Even more surprising in a book on Satanism, however, is a two-page map illustrating the imperialistic ambitions of the 'Masonic' Italy of 'Brothers Lemmi and Crispi.'[1455] In fact, most of the book's 500 pages are devoted to Italian politics. The conclusion of *Le 33^e :. Crispi* sheds light on what are probably the book's intentions: to agitate against the Italian 'Republic of the Devil, […] where Satan will have his statue of massive gold under the dome of the Saint Peter', and in favour of a Federal Italian state with the restored Patrimony of Peter at its centre… and the Pope as President! 'Salute to the Pope-King, President of the Italian Republic!' Diana Vaughan alias Léo Taxil cheers on the last page, leaving the historian in a state of mild bewilderment.[1456] Was this still part of Taxil's giant practical joke? Or was it all meant to be taken seriously, and was he advised to write this, even furnished with material maybe, by people he could not afford to refuse?

A suggestive picture emerges from the three points that we have listed. Taxil had been in contact with two clerics who served as covert liaisons between the papacy and the press; Catholic press organs allied to the Papacy ranked high among the periodicals that spread his antimasonic tales of horror; the content of these tales closely corresponds to the papal political agenda, and sometimes amounts to undiluted papal propaganda. Was Pope Leo XIII, would-be president of the Italian Republic, the secret employer of Léo Taxil? Did he use the former freethinker as franc-tireur to manipulate Catholic opinion in France? It would not have been the first time that the Vatican used questionable mercenaries in its efforts to influence public opinion. In Germany, the Papacy had employed the shady Protestant publicist Wallgreen Schuman to incite anti-Italian feelings in the Protestant press.[1457] In practice, Taxil was fulfilling the same role in France. Was this a coincidence? Or was Taxil funded and briefed by the Papacy as well, through some as yet unidentified middleman?

In this respect, it might be interesting to have a closer look at the attitude the Papacy adopted towards Taxil and his Palladium hoax. This has been object of differing interpretations, among both contemporary and current historians. The central question here is usually this: did

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[1453] Viaene, 'A Brilliant Failure,' 255.
[1454] The charter is reproduced in Vaughan, *Crispi*, 317.
[1455] Vaughan, *Crispi*, 472-473.
[1456] Vaughan, *Crispi*, 489, 491.
[1457] Viaene, ''Wagging the dog',' 341.

the pontiff and his retinue fall for Taxil's tales? That Leo XIII believed in a Masonic conspiracy of some kind hardly needs corroboration. His encyclicals attest to this, and we will have occasion to cite further proof below. Nor does this need to surprise us unduly in an age in which even great statesmen like Joseph de Maistre and Benjamin Disraeli embraced conspiracy theories centering on Masonic secret societies.[1458] Within the Roman Catholic hierarchy, belief in a great Masonic conspiracy must have been even more virulent. We have already seen that Schorderet died in the firm conviction that Masons were after his life, and even a Realpolitiker *pur sang* as Wladimir Czacky – the *innominato* of the Black International – was motivated in his covert activities by the idea that the Papacy must be upheld as a last theocratic banner in a world dominated by secret Masonic machinations.[1459]

That the Pope believed in the reality of the Masonic plot hence is hardly a matter of doubt. But did he also adhere to the particular Taxilian variant of the Masonic conspiracy theory, with its secret sex rites, its inner circle of Lucifer-worshipping Palladists, its diabolic apparitions, and hidden subterranean temples? It seems utterly incredible. But again, we should not consider the Pope a priori any wiser than his coreligionists. Taxil was believed to a greater or lesser degree by many in the hierarchy: Bishop Meurin and Bishop Fava may be cited as two particularly flagrant cases. In his official encyclicals, Leo XIII never adopted the explicit diabolical schemes propagated in Taxil's writings: for all its demonising rhetoric, *Humanum Genus* speaks of Freemasons as adherents to 'Naturalism' and rationalism, not Satanism. Yet the Pope certainly was not disinclined to accept the possibility of active intervention by Satan in the earthly battle between the city of God and the kingdom of the devil. He reintroduced, for example, a special exorcism of Satan in the official rituals of exorcism, and added a prayer to Saint Michael to the Mass ordinarium that beseeched the archangel's protection against the forces of evil.[1460] These innovations must have been the reflection of some kind of inner conviction, and the depiction Taxil gave of Leo XIII as an old man darkly muttering about the devil might have had a core of truth in it. They suggest a mindset in which Palladic constructions might well fit.

If we look at the official and semi-official utterances of the Vatican regarding Taxil, no clear image emerges. It is true, as we have seen, that Taxil obtained an audience with the Holy Father in 1887. But although Taxil was able to list nineteen short or long letters of recommendation from various French bishops in his book on female Freemasonry of 1891, the Holy See remained silent. This contrasts starkly with a no less shady figure than Paul Rosen, who cited a long personal letter from Pope Leo XIII at the front of his second book.[1461]

[1458] On conspiracy theories in early nineteenth century Europe, see J. M. Roberts, *The Mythology of the Secret Societies* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1972). See also Disreali, *Lord George Bentinck*, 553: 'The origin of the secret societies that prevail in Europe is very remote. It is probable that they were originally confederations of conquered races organized in a great measure by the abrogated hierarchies. In Italy they have never ceased, although they have at times been obliged to take various forms; sometimes it was a literary academy, sometimes a charitable brotherhood; freemasonry was always a convenient guise. […] The two characteristics of these confederations which now cover Europe as a network, are war against property and hatred of the Semitic revelation.'

[1459] Viaene, 'A Brilliant Failure,' 233.

[1460] 'Exorcismus in Satanam et angelos apostaticos,' in *Rituale Romanum Pauli V Pontificus Maximi jussu editum, aliorumque pontificum cura recognitum atque auctoritate ssmi. d. n. Pii Papæ XI ad norman codicis juris canonici accommodatum* (Ratisbonæ: Friderici Pustet, 1925) 354-357. The 'Small Exorcism against Satan and the fallen angels' was promulgated 18 May 1890; cf. Dvorak, *Satanismus*, 160. The Prayer to Saint Michael was added to the Leonine Prayers in 1886; the addition was directly linked to developments in the Roman Question.A corpus of lore grew up around the prayer, which told how Leo XIII had been inspired to write it after seeing a host of demons hovering above the eternal City in a vision; cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer_to_Saint_Michael, accessed 14 November 2011.

[1461] Rosen, *L'Ennemie Sociale*, iv-v. A Belgian priest writing on Freemasonry, Auguste Onclair, also received a long approbative letter from Leo XIII for his book *La franc-maçonnerie contemporaine* from 1885, which is integrally cited by Barrucand, 'Quelques aspects de l'antimaçonnisme,' 98.

Diana Vaughan, it is true, did correspond with various members of the papal hierarchy. Taxil quoted extensively from these letters in both Diana Vaughan's publications and his own final declaration in 1897. We already cited a letter by Cardinal Parocchi, the Papal Vicar, transmitting a 'most special benediction' of the Pope; Parocchi added to this that he had been reading Vaughan's memoirs, which he considered of 'palpitating interest'.[1462] When Diana Vaughan's book on Crispi was sent to the Pope, the response was a short letter written by Monsignor Vincenzo Sardi, one of Leo's private secretaries. It contained a formal expression of gratitude for the volume and an appeal to continue the good work: 'Go on, Miss, go on to write and to unmask the iniquitous sect! To this purpose, Providence has allowed you to be part of it for such a long time…'[1463] However significant this may be, the Pope never deigned to respond in person to Taxil's overtures. Only 'Grand Master' Dominico Margiotta could boast of having received a note from His Holiness himself. Its laconic nature and three single lines of text, however, hardly amounted to a spectacular papal avowal of support.[1464]
In the controversy that arose about the question of whether Diana existed, the Papacy also remained aloof. Yet one can detect some cautious expressions in acceptance of the Grand Mistress's reality. On 27 May 1896, Rodolfo Verzichi, the secretary of the Universal Antimasonic Union at Rome, addressed the following official letter to the converted Grand Mistress:

> Miss,
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> Monsignor Vincenzo Sardi, one of the private secretaries of the Holy Father, has given me charge to write to you, by order of His Holiness himself.
> I must tell you also that His Holiness has read with great pleasure your *Eucharistic Novena*.
> The Commander Mr. Alliata [the President of the Antimasonic Union] has had an interview with the Cardinal-Vicar [Parocchi] with regard to the veracity of your conversion. His Eminence is convinced; but He has made clear to our president that He can not give a public testimony. 'I can not betray the secrets of the Holy Office'; that is what His eminence has responded to the Commander Mr. Alliata.
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> Yours truly in Our Lord.[1465]

This and other indications imply that the Vatican was actively occupied with the Diana Vaughan Question. When the Congress at Trent deferred the case to a special Vatican committee, this special committee turned out to exist already. Other sources allude to the existence of a dossier entitled 'Vaughan, Taxil, and Company' in the files of the Holy Office (this is certainly something a historian of Satanism would like to read).[1466] In the months preceding and following the congress in Trent, a flurry of correspondence left Rome in order to establish the truth of the matter. Bishop Lazzareschi, president of the Antimasonic Congress, and Commandeur Alliata, president of the Universal Antimasonic Committee, both addressed Father Bessonies, president of the French Antimasonic Committee, asking for 'documents that are able to prove that Palladism, as it is revealed in the works signed by Doctor Bataille, Dominico Margiotta and Diana Vaughan, really exists'.[1467] On 15 November 1896, Monseigneur A. Villard, the secretary of Cardinal Parocchi, followed suit, writing on

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[1462] Letter by Cardinal Parocchi, 16 December 1895 quoted by Taxil; Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 179.
[1463] Letter by Vincenzo Sardi, 11 July 1896, quoted by Taxil; Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 180.
[1464] Margiotta, *Le Palladisme*, 1.
[1465] Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 179.
[1466] Gerber, *Betrug als Ende eines Betruges*, 111.
[1467] Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 316-318.

behalf of the special committee of investigation that was presided over by the latter. In his epistle, Villard assured the reader that the question of Diana Vaughan's existence could only be decided with authority at Rome, 'but Rome, I repeat to you, needs more information': 'It is an error to think that Rome is completely informed at her regard.' He added 'in complete confidentiality' that Taxil had gravely compromised her cause, and underlined it to be 'extremely important' that she disengaged herself from her 'pretended defender'.[1468] Villard repeated his requests in several letters during the subsequent months, addressing Diana Vaughan directly as well.[1469] Also in 1896, Abel Clarin de la Rive, the shrewd expert on Masonic tunnelling, was sent on a mission to Gibraltar with the official sanctification of Cardinal Parocchi to find out if Freemasonry was really operating hidden workplaces in the Cliff of Tarik. In America, the ultramontane Quebecois journalist Tardivel was commissioned with a similar mission.[1470]

If these indications adequately reflect the attitude of the Papacy, it is evident that the Vatican already knew or had decided that Taxil was unreliable, but was completely at a loss with regard to the actual nature of his creation Diana Vaughan.[1471] Meanwhile, the official attitude of the Holy See did not become much clearer. After endless deliberations, as we have seen, the special committee issued a neutral verdict on the Vaughan Question, at the same time using the occasion to castigate the troublesome German press for its sin of hypercriticism. The impression one gets is that it was one of the two. Either the Vatican was genuinely in doubt and did not a priori wish to discard the possibility that a High Priestess of a secret inner-Masonic organisation devoted to the worship of Lucifer had indeed defected to the Church; or it was deliberately holding its hand over a set-up that it suspected or knew to be rotten, but that it considered useful anyway – giving just enough encouragement to keep it afloat but not enough to compromise itself.

Léo Taxil, for one, was firmly convinced of the latter, and squarely accused the Papacy of this policy during his final press conference. In Rome, where 'all indications come together', people would surely have been aware that there were no female Freemasons who surrendered themselves to sexual initiation rites.[1472] Moreover, local ecclesiastical dignitaries who had denied some of his revelations had been deliberately hushed by the Vatican at several occasions.[1473] Taxil's utterances, however, need to be treated with extreme caution. For Taxil

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[1468] Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 369-370.

[1469] Letters from 16 November 1896, 30 November 1896, 29 December 1896, 7 and 8 January 1897, 25 January 1897, 6 February 1897, 21 March 1897; Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 370-378. It is clear from this correspondence that Villard was initially convinced of the existence of Vaughan; in a private letter to Bessonies, he expressed his surprise that a private letter that he had addressed to her 'dans l'unique but de lui apporter un peu de consolation et d'encouragement dans les circonstances actuelles' had been promptly rendered to the public (Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 370). In these and other letters, moreover, he repeatedly emphasized the disorientation of Rome regarding Diana Vaughan: 'À Rome, on desire la lumière pleine et entière. Je puis vous assurer qu'en haute lieu on est encore dans le doute' (ibidem, 370); 'Dans une question aussi grave où l'honneur de l'Église catholique est en jeu, il n'est pas permis de laisser son Chef dans le doute et le Pape, je vous l'assure, est dans le doute (20 November 1896; ibidem, 371).

[1470] Laurant, 'Le dossier Léo Taxil,' 61; *Diana Vaughan: Haar persoon, haar werk en haar aanstaande komst*, 37. It is hard to say if the Vatican intended these ventures as serious reconnaissance undertakings or simply sent the two well-intentioned reporters away to busy themselves on some impossible errand. 'La véritable enquête n'a pas été faite par les hommes dont les noms ont été livrés à la publicité,' Villard assured Bessonies in a letter from 25 January 1897, 'Ceux-là ont servi de couverture à l'enquête secrète, mais ils n'ont jamais pu la connaître. Je ne puis pas vous en dire davantage.' At the same time, Bessonies was conducting his own private investigation through his contacts with the Catholic press in America. See Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 376 (letter Villard); 379-389 (investigation Bessonies).

[1471] In a told-you-so letter to Bessonies from 29 april 1897, Villard claimed that 'À Rome, Léo Taxil était regardé depuis quelque temps comme un individu de plus mauvaise espèce, surtout pornographe et hypocrite.' – Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 378.

[1472] Taxil in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 177.

was pursuing his own plot in this respect. It is evident that he wanted to crown his operation of deceit by trapping the Papacy into implicating itself in his fraud. This might have been his prime reason for continuing to impersonate a Catholic author for twelve years; and this might have been the reason he sent his books to the Holy See time after time. The letters he received in return were compromising enough. But Taxil was fishing for some more official token of approbation.[1474] Taxil's last book on Crispi can also be interpreted as a last desperate bid for overt Papal approval, a dance of courtship to entice Leo XIII into some blatantly compromising mating posture. This might account for its blunt papal propaganda with regard to the Roman Question, and also for the somewhat embarrassing poem on Leo XIII on its opening pages. The Pope did not really fall for the bait, however, and the short message of encouragement by Monsignor Sardi that we cited earlier was the only thing Taxil got.

Although Taxil liked to paint the Vatican as a prey to helpless confusion, it is clear that he entertained a high, possibly inflated notion of the powers wielded by Rome. In a way, it was the Papacy that had incited him to come out in the open in the first place. The Congress at Trent had voted for the essentially Satanist nature of Freemasonry; but simultaneously, its predominantly Italian organisers had prevented Taxil from assuming any important official functions. We may safely assume the hand of the Vatican behind this. Taxil, for his part, clearly understood the hint, and feared the effects that a whispered word from the Papacy could have. 'The peril that threatened was silence; it was the strangling of the mystification in the backrooms of a Roman committee; it was an interdict to the Catholic papers to whisper another word upon it.'[1475]

This last sentence almost suggests that Taxil knew something of how the Papacy aimed to direct the Catholic press behind the scenes. If the Vatican had also been covertly employing or exploiting Taxil, however, he himself was clearly not aware of this. Otherwise he certainly would have thrown this compromising information into the open when he decided to raise his Catholic mask. Instead, he tried to row with the oars he had and compromise the Papacy as much as he could during his press conference anyhow. But although he might have had more of a point than he suspected himself, it is clear Taxil did not really convince most of his contemporaries. He was missing the spectacular piece of evidence that incontestably implicated Leo XIII. In the end, the non-committal approach of the Papacy bore fruit, and the Pontiff's reputation escaped relatively unharmed from the collapse of the Palladium.

It is time to draw this section to a conclusion. What can we salvage from the wreckage of historical suggestions? Was the Vatican involved in the Taxil hoax? Or have we fallen prey to the temptation of conspiracy thinking ourselves? Whatever the truth may be, it is evident that simple options do not apply. The Holy See did *not* control Taxil as a sort of enlisted secret agent. The outcome of the whole affair makes this abundantly clear; and all Taxil's utterances suggest that he was working pretty much on his own. The Vatican, moreover, seems to have been as bewildered about the Diana Vaughan story as a good many other Catholics. Yet there is much to suggest, at the very least, that the Vatican was not averse to riding the Taxilian bandwagon; and there are some tantalizing shreds of information that could imply that it had

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[1473] According to Taxil, Mgr. Northrop, bishop of Charleston, travelled 'tout exprès' to the Vatican to deny the Taxilian allegations about his town of residence; he repeated his denials in an interview while travelling to Rome, but held his tongue after he returned from the Eternal City. Cf. Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 178.

[1474] In letter to Gabriel Bessonies from 25 April 1895, Taxil explicitly asked for a personal token of support from the Pope, threatening to resign from the antimasonic battle otherwise because of 'toutes les inimitiés de mauvaise foi que ma lutte contre la secte maçonnique m'a values'. 'Si le Saint-Père daigne écrire personnellement un mot d'approbation, j'en serai très heureux ; il me consolera ainsi u chagrin que j'éprouve pour les avanies subies depuis déjà longtemps.' (Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 50-52) This appeal to the Pope's pastoral care remained fruitless as well.

[1475] Taxil in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 182

been actively involved in setting Taxil up as an antimasonic writer, and that it continued to give him at least tacit support in his later career. This would probably make Taxil the greatest failure in the history of Vatican press policy. Although it must be remembered that Taxil was intently courting the Papacy, the remarkable accuracy with which his work sometimes follows the fault lines of Vatican international policy is hard to ascribe to the shrewd political instincts of a hackney writer alone.

The only firm conclusion we can draw is that more research is necessary. The seemingly peripheral stories we recounted earlier in this section might present a good starting point for this. Interesting facts might emerge, for instance, with closer study of Taxil's relations with the apostolic nunciature and with Joseph Schorderet. For the latter, the strange history of the Fribourg grotto might offer an interesting start. Pinpointing the exact source of the persistent rumour about the Palladic temple in the Palazzo Borghese could also produce some interesting insights. The evidence we surmised suggests that this story was already circulating in Italy before it was published in France; this, in turn, might indicate that for at least this particular piece of misinformation, Taxil was not responsible.[1476] Who was the 'accredited correspondent at Rome' that brought it into circulation? And could it have been the Vatican *Cassa di stampa* that supplied it to him? This would furnish clear proof that the Vatican was much more actively involved in the exploitation of the Taxil fraud than it would have liked to disclose. In the meantime, it remains an exciting idea to imagine Léo Taxil and Leo XIII locked up in a strange kind of duel without knowing it, each trying to manipulate the other for his own designs, and each sliding out of the other's embrace at exactly the critical moment.

a few words on Satan in Freemasonry, and on neo-Palladism

An apology to the reader might be due by now. We have spent many pages discussing Roman Catholicism, in a historical account that professes to be about Satanism. As in the case of J.-K. Huysmans that we discussed earlier, the realities of Satanism only played a small role in the story of Taxil and the Palladism hoax. The religious Satanism within Freemasonry that its Catholic opponents and Taxil described never existed except as a product of human fantasy. Nevertheless, for the sake of comprehensiveness, it seems appropriate to take a look at the reality of Freemasonry as well. This may eventually lead us to the question that we have not yet properly addressed and that is largely unexplored by modern historiography: if we dismiss the obvious constructions of fantasy, was something going on with Satan in Freemasonry after all?[1477]

A lot remains unclear about the early history of Freemasonry. Latest research has indicated Scotland as the country of origin of the Masonic fraternity as it exists today.[1478] Towards the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, the medieval guild of masons here was transformed into a semi-esoteric lodge also admitting those not practising the craft of masonry. Spreading to England, the new association fell under the influence of the Latitudinarian deism of Newton and consorts, and soon became a popular pastime for gentlemen. From the United Kingdom, Freemasonry spread to the Americas and continental Europe. In these regions, the Craft identified itself increasingly with the values of the

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[1476] This did not prevent him from making effective use of it as an independent corroboration of the existence of Palladism *vis à vis* his Catholic opponents; cf. *Revue mensuelle religieuse, politique, scientifique: Complément de la publication Le Diable au XIXe Siècle* 2 (May 1895) 17:300-305.

[1477] Only Introvigne in his chapter on Taxil in *Enquête sur le Satanisme* treats this question in some depth, basing his views partly on Aldo Mola's article 'La Ligue antimaçonnique'. As I was unable to explore primary Masonic sources, this section must remain preliminary. The use of Satanic metaphor in nineteenth-century Freemasonry, particularly in Italy, certainly deserves further historical research.

[1478] On the early history of Freemasonry, see Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry*. Roger Dachez, 'Freemasonry,' in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 1:382-388, gives an helpful introduction.

Enlightenment, such as religious tolerance and rationalism. Most of the Founding Fathers of the American Revolution were active Lodge members.

This identification with the Enlightenment was never complete. The eighteenth century also saw the emergence of a wide variety of rites and disciplines within Masonry, most of them strongly esoteric in nature. According to the fashion of the times, wild theories about the origin of the Craft were proposed which linked Freemasonry to the Templars, the druids, the Essenes, or the Kabbalah – many of which would find thankful re-usage among antimasonic conspiracy theorists.[1479] In Germany, real conspirators sought to control Freemasonry for their own political purposes: the famous Illuminati for their own agenda of radical Enlightenment; the Rosicrucian brotherhood for the defence of traditional values. In France, the first Lodge was strictly Catholic, consisting of Englishmen who had followed the Catholic King James II into French exile. Native lodges soon sprang up and became major dissemination centres of the ideas of the *philosophes*. Yet the French Revolution, when it came, cut right through the ranks of Freemasonry. Because *tout le monde*, so to say, had been a Mason Brother, many Freemasons could be found among the Revolutionaries; many others, however, found themselves on the opposite side of the line.

It was only in the aftermath of the French Revolution that Freemasonry in France (and in other Roman Catholic countries such as Belgium, Italy, and Spain) came to identify itself fully with the values of the Western Revolution. Before the Revolution, it had not been particularly uncommon for priests or clerics to be Lodge members; afterwards, this became unthinkable – not just because the Roman Catholic interdict was now upheld with maximal severity, but also because French Freemasonry took a definite anticlerical turn and increasingly frowned on the idea of a priest being a Freemason.[1480] In the decades that followed, French Freemasonry grew into a sort of unofficial 'Church of the Republic' and embarked on a secularisation process of its own. The traditional requirement of belief in a deity for neophytes was dropped in 1877; in 1879, the references to the 'Grand Architect of the Universe' were removed from the Grand Orient; in 1887, less religiously tinged rituals were introduced. From 1895 on, high-ranking masons were obliged to be buried civilly.[1481]

These measures indicate how both sides increasingly dug themselves into holes as the secularisation struggle continued. They also prompted a sort of secularisation struggle within Freemasonry itself. The more traditionally inclined lodges of the Anglo-Saxon world objected strongly when the French Grand Orient removed the requirement to believe in a deity in 1877, and eventually broke off relations of amity with their French brethren. Continental or Liberal Freemasonry, as it often came to be called, became the dominant style of Freemasonry in the Latin countries of Europe and South America. Within France, a 'Grand Loge de France' separated itself from the Grand Orient in 1894, reuniting lodges that disagreed with the agnostic and anticlerical stance of the latter.

Curiously, Albert Pike (1809-1891), the alleged Pope of Luciferianism, had been particularly vocal in persuading the United Grand Lodge of England and its many affiliated Grand Lodges to oust the infidel French from traditional Masonry. Pike, a former Confederate brigadier general, had been 'Sovereign Grand Commander of the Southern Jurisdiction of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry' until his death at age 81. Although a towering figure in American Freemasonry, he was certainly not the titular head of international Masonry. No such figure existed anyhow in the federal structure of Freemasonry. Pike had been avidly interested in occultism all his life, and his antagonism towards a secular Freemasonry was inspired not so much by Christian affiliation as by a desire to defend the place within Freemasonry of what we would now call spirituality. In this, the Sovereign

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[1479] Rousse-Lacordaire, *Rome et les Franc-Maçons*, 69.
[1480] Rousse-Lacordaire, *Rome et les Franc-Maçons*, 77.
[1481] Rousse-Lacordaire, *Rome et les Franc-Maçons*, 114-155.

Grand Master was clearly inspired by Éliphas Lévi, the father of occultism; and the influence of Lévi was also tangible in the few scattered passages on the fallen angel that can be found in his Masonic writings. In his explanation of the third degree in *Morals and Dogmas of Freemasonry*, for instance, Pike wrote with typical Lévian ambiguity: 'The true name of Satan, the Kabalists say, is that of Yahveh reversed; for Satan is not a black god, but the negation of God. The Devil is the personification of Atheism or Idolatry. For the Initiates, this is not a Person, but a Force, created for good, but which may serve for evil. It is the instrument of Liberty or Free Will. They represent this Force, which presides over the physical generation, under the mythologic and horned form of the God PAN; thence came the he-goat of the Sabbat, brother of the Ancient Serpent, and the Light-bearer or Phosphor, of which the poets have made the false Lucifer of the legend.'[1482]

It was not these scattered passages, however, that earned Pike the doubtful honour of being proclaimed the earthly representative of Satan. It was Paul Rosen who first awarded the American Sovereign Commander this prerogative; and his inspiration had been Pike's response to the Encyclical *Humanum Genus* of Pope Leo XIII. In this 'Reply of Freemasonry on behalf of the Human Race to the Encyclical Letter 'Humanum Genus' of the Pope Leo XIII', and in the 'praelocution' that preceded it, Pike gave the Pope an eloquent *quid pro quo*, pointing to the Roman Catholic Church as the real conspirator against lawful governments, calling the Encyclical 'a declaration of war against the human race', and its widest possible publication the best service Freemasonry could do itself.[1483] 'With such a Past as that of the Church of Rome has, it would have been wise not to provoke comment upon its real crimes by accusing others of having committed imaginary ones,' the Sovereign Grand Commander pointedly concluded.[1484] Whether wilfully or out of sincere conviction, Rosen misinterpreted this gesture as a proclamation by Pike as head of all Freemasonry.[1485] Once Pike's status as commander of Satan's auxiliary forces had been established, it was not hard to find dark allusions in Pike's esoteric writings. Rosen stumbled upon a little book by Pike called *Sephar H'Debarim, The Book of the Words*, which in eighteenth-century fashion proposed the 'generative principle' as the origin of all godhead, and which according to Rosen contained 'horrors that only the Devil could have dictated to him'.[1486] Taxil, who adopted Rosen's notion of Pike as Anti-Pope, showed even more ingenuity in this respect. When he discovered some juvenile poetry of Pike in an age-old issue of Blackwood's Magazine (a cycle of poems called 'Hymns to the gods'), he reissued these under the name of Diana Vaughan as the official hymnal of the pagan religion that Pike sought to reinstate.[1487]

[1482] Albert Pike*, Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry , prepared for the Supreme Council of the Thirty Third Degree for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States* (Charleston: s.i., A. M. 5632 [1871]), 65. Similar ambiguous statements can be found on p. 210, where Pike describes Lucifer thus: 'LUCIFER, the Light-bearer! Strange and mysterious name to give to the Spirit of Darknesss! Lucifer, the Son of the Morning! Is it he who bears the Light, and with its splendors intolerable blinds feeble, sensual or selfish Souls? Doubt it not! for traditions are full of Divine Revelations and Inspirations: and Inspiration is not of one Age nor of one Creed.' This passage is sometimes still referred to as a proof for Pike's 'Luciferianism', but the context makes it abundantly clear that he considered Lucifer to be the embodiment of a 'lesser' light, the light of the material world that blinds 'feeble, sensual or selfish Souls' – the true disciple of wisdom seeks the divinity alone. Although Pike's debt to Lévi is obvious in these and other passages, Pike seldom made explicit mention of the French esoterist in his writings; an exception can be found in *The Book of the Words* (Whitefish, Mo.: Kessinger Publishing, 1992), 169n. See also Dachez, 'Freemasonry,' 387.

[1483] Albert Pike's reply and praelocution were reprinted in Alphonse Cerza, *Anti-Masonry: Light on the Past and Present Opponents of Freemasonry* (Fulton, Mo.: Ovid Bell Press, 1962), 253-295; see there 287-289, 293, 275, 265. The idea that Taxil may have found inspiration in Pike's spurious efforts to set up a Masonry of Adoption in the USA does not seem convincing to me: cf. Jay. M. Kinney, 'Shedding Light on a Possible Inspiration for Taxil's Hoax Letter: Pike's *The Masonry of Adoption,*' *Heredom* 11 (2003): 149-157

[1484] Pike in Cerza, *Anti-Masonry*, 287.

[1485] Rosen, *L'Ennemie Sociale*, 260-266.

[1486] Rosen, *Satan et Cie*, 317-318.

Were all claims against Freemasonry then mere grotesques? This would be too simple as well. Historical reality, which may look black or white from afar, usually dissolves into tints of gray when examined up close; and this is also the case with fin de siècle Freemasonry. Particularly within French, Belgian, and (it seems) Italian Freemasonry, internal currents had become dominant which promoted an explicitly political course, using the influence of the Craft for the pursuit of 'liberal' political objectives.[1488] Opposing the 'obscurantism' of the Roman Catholic Church was an important aim and motive of this program. While the French government was not 'guided' by Freemasonry, Freemasons certainly were prominent among the Republican elite. In a reflection of the confessional practices, the Lodge put forth or supported its own selected candidates in elections, rallying its members to give these their vote. (It was this practice, one may remember, to which Taxil had attributed his expulsion from the lodge when he had put himself up for election in opposition to the 'official' Masonic candidate.) In 1892, in reaction to the increasingly aggressive tone of Catholic and right-wing agitators, the Grand Orient made Freemasons who stood as candidates for parliament sign a convention that compelled them to vote in favor of the separation of State and Church, as well as the suppression of the French embassy by the Vatican.[1489] In the aftermath of the Taxil Affair and the Dreyfuss hysteria, the Grand Orient took recourse to means of action that were even more at odds with its liberal principles. Convinced of the necessity to 'purify' the French armed forces of reactionary elements, it started to monitor the religious allegiance of French army officers in a vast inventory. This inventory was put at the disposal of the fiercely anticlerical Combes government (1902-1905), who saw to it that Catholic officers received no promotions. The 'Affaire des Fiches' came to light in 1904, thanks to a Catholic infiltrator who had declared himself 'converted' to free thinking more than twelve years previously and had succeeded in becoming vice-secretary of the Grand Orient.[1490]

There were occasional kernels of reality in the material that antimasonic crusaders brought to the surface regarding Satan. Although fully ripped out of context, some of their citations from Masonic periodicals were doubtlessly genuine. As Paul Rosen had already suggested, it was predominantly Italian Freemasonry that distinguished itself by 'glorifying their Satanic affiliation with remarkable compliance'.[1491] Its strong committal to the *Risorgimento*, the Italian struggle for reunification, had placed the Freemasons here in direct opposition to the Roman Catholic Church and the Papacy. It had imbued them with a fierce anticlericalism that was sometimes reflected in radical utterances about the fallen angel. In 1880, for instance, a certain Brother G.-G. Seraffini published an article in Italy's official Masonic bulletin that eulogized Satan as 'the Spirit of the Future': 'Salute the Genius of renewal, all you who suffer. Lift up your heads, my Brothers: for he will arrive, He, Satan the Great!'[1492] It is hard to establish the veracity of other not a priori improbable assertions of this kind, for instance the claim that Freemasons in Genoa had carried a banner saying 'Glory to Satan' through the streets in solemn procession.[1493] The future concentration camp victim Maximilian Kolbe

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[1487] Albert Pike, 'Hymns to the gods,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 45 (June 1839) 284:819-830; Diana Vaughan, *La restauration du paganisme: Transition décrétée par le Sanctum Regnum pour préparer l'établissement du culte public de Lucifer. Les hymnes liturgiques de Pike. Rituel du néo-paganisme* (Paris: Librairie Antimaçonnique, [1896]).

[1488] Cholvy, *La religion en France*, 87-90. For the Belgian situation, see Els Witte, 'Pierre-Théodore Verhaegen et la franc-maçonnerie,' in *Pierre-Théodore Verhaegen: l'homme, sa vie, sa légende. Bicentaire d'une naissance*, ed. Jean Stengers (Bruxxelles: Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1996), 47-60.

[1489] Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 102.

[1490] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 192-194.

[1491] Rosen, *L'Ennemie Sociale*, 348.

[1492] Rosen, *L'Ennemie Sociale*, 349; Ricoux, *L'existence des loges de femmes*, 91n; Margiotta, *Adriano Lemmi* 269n, citing *Rivista della Massoneria Italiana* 10 (1879-1880), 265, colon 1-2.

recounted how he decided to become priest while in Rome in 1917 and seeing Italian Freemasons hoist a banner on which Lucifer subdued Michael, with the motto 'Satan will reign in the Vatican and the Pope will be his slave'.[1494]

These utterances do not prove the existence of a hidden cult of Satan within Italian Freemasonry. But they do suggest the existence of a metaphoric 'Satanism' treading in the footsteps of the Romantic Satanists. Nowhere is this clearer than in the most well-known pro-Satanic declaration of an Italian Freemason, the famous 'Inno a Satana' by Giosuè Carducci.[1495] Carducci was in all probability the only Romantic Satanist to win a Nobel Prize (in 1906), and his hymn can be considered a résumé of classic Romantic Satanism in fifty stanzas. It represents Satan as the embodiment of nature, the origin of *eros*, the inspiring force of poetry, and the divine presence in the gods of Antiquity; although driven underground by Christianity, he has gradually been regaining territory ever since, first during the Renaissance and the Reformation (even Martin Luther was inspired by the devil, according to Carducci's poem), and more clearly in the triumphs of science and the stirrings of revolution in recent times. Embracing an unequivocal faith in positivism and progress, the poem ends in a mood of ringing optimism. With the steam machine already heralding his coming reign, the victory of Satan is at hand and will spell final dissolution for 'the god of the greedy popes and cruel kings'.[1496]

Salute, o Satana,
O ribellione
O forza vindice
De la ragione!

Sacri a te salgano
Gl'incensi e i voti!
Hai vinto il Geova
De i sacerdoti.[1497]

(Be greeted, O Satan,
O rebellion
O avenging force
Of reason!

Sacred to you may rise
Incense and vows!
You that have triumphed over
The priest's Jehovah.)

[1493] This allegation is put into the mouth of Albert Pike in his faked *Secret Instructions* in Ricoux, *L'existence des loges de femmes*, 90, and is requoted in Margiotta, *Adriano Lemmi*, 268. Albéric Belliot in his *Manuel de Sociologie Catholique*, 387 (cited in E. Cahill, *Freemasonry and the Anti-Christian Movement*, Second, Revised Edition (Dublin: M.H. Gill & Son, 1930), 69-70) mentions a similar occurrence in Geneva on 20 September 1884 [sic]; possibly the same event is meant and the transference is due to a mistranslation by Cahill.

[1494] Dvorak, *Satanismus*, 256.

[1495] The complete text of the poem can be found in Zacharias, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe*, 133-138.

[1496] 'il dio de' rei pontifici/ de' re cruenti'; Zacharias, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe*, 134.

[1497] Zacharias, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe*, 138. A similar connection between Satan and progress is also evident in the poem 'Rehabilitación' (1878) by the Spanish poet Joaquín María Bartrina y de Aixemús, which associates Satan with revolution and the 'triunfante carro del Progreso': Joaquín Maria Bartrina, *Obras poéticas* (Barcelona: Bosch, 1939), 56. I do not know whether this poet was in any way connected with Freemasonry, but Taxil suggests he was by having Pike quote this poem in his apocryphal *Secret Instructions* as lines that certainly attest to the generosity of spirit of 'Brother Joaquin-Maria Bartina', but are nevertheless 'en opposition directe à l'orthodoxie maçonnique': Ricoux, *L'existence des loges de femmes*, 91n; Margiotta, *Adriano Lemmi*, 269-270.

Carducci was already a Freemason but still an unknown man of letters when he wrote this poem in 1863. It appeared under pseudonym and without his permission in several Masonic periodicals in Italy before its 'official' publication in *Il Popolo* on 8 December 1869, the day the First Vatican Concilium opened.[1498] This fact alone, of course, was welcome fodder to antimasonists of the calibre of Taxil and company. Carducci and his hymn appear fairly regularly in the Palladism saga. It was this 'Hymn of Satan' whose use Pike criticized in his faked Secret Instructions; it was this poem that Sophie 'Sapho' Walder recited in the presence of Dr. Bataille (arguing this was allowable out of respect for the poet's 'inspired inflammation'); and when Lemmi became Grand Master of Palladism, he promoted the Inno a Satana to the status of official anthem by an encyclical letter dated 21 September 1893.[1499] On this occasion, Taxil even claimed that the poem had been expressly composed at the behest of the Italian Grand Master.[1500] As a real-life personage, the Italian poet also played a role of some prominence in the Taxilian œuvre. Through the pen of Margiotta, Taxil suggested that Carducci, who was known within Freemasonry as 'Br:. 675', had been a rival candidate to Adriano Lemmi when the new Satanist Pope was elected in Rome on 20 September 1893; after he got only 13 votes against Lemmi's 46, however, he voluntarily withdrew his candidature.[1501] Carducci was quite right when he qualified these allegations as 'halfway between delirium and imposture' in a letter to Lemmi.[1502] Yet behind this utter nonsense was the bare fact that the Inno a Satana indeed seems to have functioned as a kind of battle hymn against the Roman Catholic Church and the Christian religion for Italian Freemasons. Several antimasonic authors and at least one modern historian maintain that it was regularly sung at official Masonic banquets, which would probably made this the closest that regular Freemasonry ever came to anything resembling the religious veneration of Satan.[1503]

Another work of Italian poetry brought into connection with Freemasonry and Palladism by Taxil is the epic poem *Lucifero* (1877), composed by the freethinking poet Mario Rapisardo (1844-1912). This by now largely forgotten work may be considered a late reprise of earlier Romantic Satanism as well, with mythical figures as Lucifer, Liberty, Reason, Christ, and Prometheus all making an appearance, as well as various historical figures. The book is

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[1498] Hans Rheinfelder, 'Giosuè Carducci und sein Werk,' in *Carducci. Discorsi nel Cinquantenario della morte* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1959), 501-524, there 508-511; Rosen, *L'Ennemie Sociale*, 349.

[1499] For Pike's allusions, see Ricoux, *L'existence des loges de femmes*, 91 (also quoted by Margiotta, *Adriano Lemmi*, 269, and others). The hymn mentioned is clearly Carducci's 'Inno a Satana', as the note on page 91 makes clear, for it mentions as its author Enotrio Romano, which was the pseudonym initially used by Carducci when he published the poem. By the time he wrote his later publications, Taxil seems to have found out the real identity of the poet. The passage in whichWalder recites Carducci may be found in Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle*, 1:386-391 (where Bataille also describes it as 'hymne recité à toutes les fêtes des hauts grades maçonniques'); Lemmi's solemnization of the poem in Margiotta, *Le Palladisme*, 47-48.

[1500] Margiotta, *Le Palladisme*, 47-48.

[1501] Margiotta, *Adriano Lemmi*, 309.

[1502] Carducci to Lemmi, 15 December 1885, quoted in Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 180.

[1503] F.i. Margiotta, *Adriano Lemmi*, 273; in Margiotta, *Le Palladisme*, 47-48, Taxil even claimed that Lemmi had raised the poem to the status of official hymn of Freemasonry, ordering it to be sung at all banquets in an 'Encyclical' dated 21 January 1894. Belliot in Cahill, *Freemasonry and the Anti-Christian Movement*, 69-70, mentions that the hymn was 'chanted in the crowded theatre' of Turin in 1882.

The modern historian is Massimo Introvigne, who maintains in his *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 213, that the poem was chanted 'souvent […], et dans plus d'un pays' at assemblies of nineteenth-century Freemasons. I wrote to Introvigne by email on 29 and 31 March 2010 to ask what his sources had been for this claim; he proved unable, however, to furnish me with any references and directed me to Professor Aldo Mola, who I tried in vain to contact during the better part of 2010. As I have not been in a position to search the Masonic archives in Italy myself, this puts me at a loss to establish whether the Inno a Satana was indeed ever sung by Freemasons or others. The earliest texts I found that claim this occurrence all originate with Taxil: but to anyone who can show me an example of nineteenth-century sheet music of Carducci's hymn, I hereby solemnly pledge a signed copy of this publication.

presented as a grand poetic monologue by Lucifer to Prometheus, who is finally addressed by the angel of light with the words 'Lèvati, il gran tiranno è spento!' ('Arise; the grand tyrant is no more!').[1504] This tyrant, of course, is the Christian deity, and the battle of Lucifer is the battle of Thought, Reason, and Liberty against the forces of inertia, obscurantism, and oppression, which is recounted in a series of *tableaux* that reflect the history of humanity in its long struggle for emancipation. Lucifer finds love, is persecuted by the angry deity, fights a jaguar, and assists various scenes of history, prominent among which is, again, the French Revolution. A few episodes of recent Italian history are also alluded to: for instance, the breaching of the Porta Pia during the capture of Rome in 1870 ('crowning deed of the Italian people'), and the deathbed of Pope Pius IX, who in his final moments implores Lucifer to grant him forgiveness.[1505] The poem ends in an over-the-top apotheosis in which Lucifer conquers the heavens, with most of the angels and saints defecting to his cause and only Ignatius of Loyola, Domenico di Guzman, Torquemada, and a few popes keeping their posts to defend the deity. Although I am unaware of any indications that Rapisardi was a Freemason, Taxil did not hesitate to make full use of this poetic curiosity, claiming that it was composed at the personal bequest of Albert Pike to serve as a poetic counterstroke against Carducci's *Inno a Satana*.[1506]

This pretty much sums up the allusions to Masonic 'Satanism' in Taxil's body of work that may have some ground in historical reality in one form or another. A detailed search of Masonic archives might render some more instances, but I doubt this will change the overall picture. Keeping in mind that a dedicated corps of nineteenth-century antimasonic authors was scanning Mason publications for clues to the secret worship of Satan, the few examples they managed to come up with make a decidly meagre impression. It seems safe to assume that true 'veneration of Satan' was never more than an extremely marginal occurrence within Freemasonry, and the rare and often questionable instances that have been brought forward, originating from the furnace of heated masonic-clerical conflict, point to an exclusively metaphoric use of the fallen angel, along the lines already set out by the Romantic Satanists.[1507] Behind this symbolic usage of Satan, as one historian has aptly noted, we can discern an almost complete reversion of association between anticlerical Freemasons and antimasonic Roman Catholics. In the wake of Romantic Satanism, Satan could be perceived as a positive metaphor by some Freemasons; while for most Roman Catholics, such metaphorical use could only indicate the worst of horrors. The ensuing attribution of devil worship by the latter only fortified the tendency towards identification by the former, particularly in Italy. 'In the end, all agreed, because what for the one was a crime, for the other was a motive for pride.'[1508] While there is nothing to suggest that these occasional instances of identification ever grew into a properly *religious* Satanism, it eloquently shows how the Romantic rehabilitation of Satan retained its ideological value throughout the nineteenth century.

This may also be the right moment to discuss another subject related to Palladism, a subject that will take us somewhat beyond the limits of the nineteenth century: to wit, the presumed emergence of a *Neo-Palladism*. For although it is evident that Palladism proper was an

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[1504] Mario Rapisardi, *Lucifero: Poema* (Rome: Eduardo Perino, 1887), 317.

[1505] Rapisardi, *Lucifero*, 227: 'Brecce di Porta Pia, date corone/Al sabaudo monarca, itale genti'; 271 ('E tardi!', Lucifer replies).

[1506] Margiotta, *Le Palladisme*, 47-70; Margiotta also quotes a (non-existent) letter from Pike to Rapisardi in which the Anti-Pope declares that he keeps his own translation of Rapisardi's poem with him always.

[1507] As we noted earlier, Papus also asserted that a small Italian lodge venerating Lucifer as the morning star had indeed existed. His description suggests that this occurred in an 'atheist' (i.e., secularised) lodge that extended some form of symbolic devotion to Lucifer, as the initation it offered, he claimed, 'included no occult ceremonials'. The whole story, I must add, seems extremely questionable to me.

[1508] Mola, 'La Ligue antimaçonnique,' 49.

invention altogether lacking reality, this construction evidently held appeal for some people. Alfred Pierret described how people of all rank and form visited his printing establishment at the time that he published the Luciferian periodical *Le Palladium Régénérée;* and apart from the countess who sprinkled him with holy water, most of these visitors had seemed avid to join the new Luciferian creed.[1509] In addition, Taxil gleefully recounted in his final memoir how his revelations had been taken seriously by some Freemasons themselves: those from the south of Italy had been particularly vexed, according to him, when learning from his writings that Lemmi had surreptitiously taken control over worldwide Palladism without asking them in. They convened in protest at a congress in Palermo and proceeded to found three independent Supreme Councils, those of Sicily, Naples, and Florence, naming Diana Vaughan as their protector and honorary member.[1510] Taxil's statements, however, obviously need to be treated with proper distrust. The same principle applies to the probable apocryphal story told by Massimo Introvigne, according to which Italian Masons spontaneously sent a 'tiara of Lucifer' to Lemmi on 20 September 1894, to honour his ascension to the position of head of Palladism the year before.[1511]

Introvigne also tells us about two groups of Neopalladists that operated in Paris during the Interbellum and sought to 'reproduce as much as possible' the rites of Palladism.[1512] The Italian historian bases his claims on the works of Pierre Geyraud, pseudonym for the 'ancien ecclésiastique' Raoul Guyader, a French journalist who wrote reportages in the style of Jules Bois about the colourful religious groups that he found in Paris during the 1930s. The 'Neo-Palladists' were first described in his third volume on this subject.[1513] After a short introduction to Luciferianism (in which he uncritically repeats a range of Taxilian inventions), Geyraud provided a vivid description of a 'Palladic initiation'. He hastened to explain that he had not witnessed this ceremony himself: instead, in his publication he reproduced the written account of an initiate 'whom I already know a long time'.[1514] In this account, the anonymous initiate tells how he received, one day, a mysterious letter of invitation to attend an unusual ceremony; in it, he was instructed to wait at a given hour on the quays close to the Notre Dame. Driven by curiosity, he complied. As he walked on the quay, a limousine stopped beside him, and he was asked to step in the car and blindfold his eyes. After arriving at their destination and descending several staircases, he was told to remove his blindfold and found himself in an oval room clad in black velour and ornamented with inverted pentagrams and 'ritual daggers'. He was dressed in a white robe and subjected to some pseudo-masonic trials in the presence of forty-odd fellow-Palladists. When he had proved himself worthy, the whole congregation gave him the kiss of peace on his behind, while the Master, a man in a black robe and a blood-red cap nicknamed the 'Black Pope', transmitted 'the breath of the Order' to him by kissing him on the mouth.

[1509] *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste Parfaite Initiée, Indépendante* 2 (5 May 1897) 23:714. Pierret especially remembered the visit of a former prefect, who asked him 'Vous êtes luciférien, vous êtes franc-maçon?' and hastily departed when the Catholic publisher denied this.

[1510] Taxil in Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 174, 176. This is probably the source for the assertion that genuine Palladist groups arose after Taxil started to spread his allegations, primarily in Italy, as is claimed by Josef Dvorak in a note to Stanislaw Przybyszewski, *Die Synagoge Satans: Entstehung und Kult des Hexensabbats, des Satanismus und der Schwarzen Messe* (Berlin: Verlag Clemens Zerling, 1979), 140n.

[1511] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 204. Introvigne indicates as his source Pierre Geyraud, *Les religions nouvelles de Paris* (Paris: Éditions Émile-Paul frères, 1937 [=1939]), 161, who only mentions this fact in one single sentence: 'C'est ainsi que le 20 septembre 1894, une secte palladiste confia le tiare de Lucifer à l'Antipape Lemmi.' It is clear from the context that Geyraud here simply refers to the Taxilian story of the election of Lemmi as Palladic Grand Master, misspelling the date as '20 September 1894' instead of '20 September 1893'.

[1512] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 200-201. Introvigne is the only notable historian devoting a few lines to these reports, in which he proves himself, to my opinion, much too uncritical toward Geyraud.

[1513] Geyraud, *Les religions nouvelles de Paris*, 158-171 ['Les Neo-Palladistes'].

[1514] Geyraud, *Les religions nouvelles de Paris*, 161-162.

After this, a pretty hefty ritual began. A statue was revealed of a figure 'half he-goat, half ox, half man, half woman, with two splendid horns of silver, between which shone a small circle of brilliant green'. It is, of course, Baphomet. An inverted crucifix was attached nearby. A woman now appeared and started to dance, baring her left breast. The Grand Master solemnly asked her: 'Quid velis? (What do you want?),' to which she replied: 'Ad sacrificium offere corpus meum (To offer my body in sarcifice).' She was then stretched out on the altar, the Grand Master intoning a kind of offertory with a black host in his hands, and the audience responding with repeated cries of *Laus Satani!* The officiate placed a number of profaned hosts on the woman's sex, after which the Palladists, 'excited to the heights of antique orgies' by the 'heavy and suffocating odour of the perfumes of rut, henbane leaves, and datura', launched itself onto the eagerly awaiting 'living altar'.[1515] The inevitable orgy ensued, during which the Black Pope endeavoured to absorb the psychic energy of the collective coitus. The ritual ended rather abruptly when the bats that hung from the ceiling to serve as lanterns suddenly started to detonate (sic!). The initiate, who had not been allowed to join the orgy, was now led to a corner of the room where his personal 'shakti' awaited him, a beautiful woman 'of Nordic race and the most perfect lunar type'.

Although Geyraud insisted that he personally knew several of the persons that had been present at these ceremonies, his account sounds rather fantastic, to say the least. For these fantastic elements, however, only partial credit is due to Geyraud or his anonymous informer. At least half the story, in fact, is copied from an article by Serge Basset published in May 1899 in the French newspaper *Le Matin*, and republished in 1927 in a book on occultism by a certain Frédéric Boutet.[1516] After he had expressed doubts about whether the black Mass was still celebrated in modern Paris, Basset tells in this article, he had received two letters and a personal visit from a mysterious woman who offered to show him 'things'. After this familiar introduction, the story develops along practically identical lines to that of Geyraud, including blindfold, guards, and Latin questioning, with the difference that Basset flees the scene of the Satanist gathering when the orgy commences, and is thus is unable to describe exploding bats or personal shaktis. Basset, moreover, did not give his assembly the appendage 'Neo-Palladist', but claimed that they called themselves 'the Brothers and Sisters of the Observance of the Evil One'.

Basset's story sounds a bit too much like J.-K. Huysmans's persiflage to be true. Apparently, this is also what Geyraud himself eventually concluded, for in the selection from his reportages that he published in 1954, he retained his introduction to Luciferianism and Palladism, but omitted the story of the catacomb orgy with the exploding bats.[1517] Instead, he inserted another of his earlier reportages, namely that on the T.H.L. or 'Très-Haut Lunaire' ('Most High Lunary').[1518] Geyraud got acquainted with this group, he recounts, when he was walking on midsummer night in a forest near Paris and chanced upon a group of sixty men and women dancing around some ancient megaliths. These midsummer night dancers turned out to be an occult society called T.H.L., based on rue Chapon, Paris. The only thing that gives this group a vague resemblance to Palladism, however, is the fact that they venerate Baphomet (which could be found just as well on the pages of Éliphas Lévi) and that their leader is called 'the black Pope' (by Geyraud). If they really existed at all, they seem to have been, as far as one can gather from Geyraud's description, some sort of Crowleyan proto-

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[1515] Geyraud, *Les religions nouvelles de Paris*, 169.

[1516] Serge Basset, 'Une messe noire: Chez les adorateurs du prince des ténèbres,' *Le Matin*. 14 (27 May 1899) 5571:1-2; Boutet, *Tableau de l'au-delà* , 173-175.

[1517] Pierre Geyraud, *Sectes & rites, petites églises, religions nouvelles, sociétés secrètes de Paris* (Paris: Éditions Émile-Paul frères, 1954), 119-128.

[1518] Pierre Geyraud, *Les sociétés secrètes de Paris* (Paris: Éditions Émile-Paul frères, 1938), 112-118.

Wiccans.[1519] And with that, Geyraud's Neo-Palladism dissolves into the mists of myth and mystification once again, just like its original model.

The Jewish Question

'Antisemitism in the nineteenth century was as French as the baguette,' a historian of fin de siècle France has remarked.[1520] Anti-Jewish attitudes were rife during the Third Republic, and the years in which the Taxil hoax reached its apogee were also those in which the Dreyfus Affaire burst into the open, splitting the French nation into two opposite camps. This historical account would be inadequate without delving into the relation between Taxil's mystification and the 'Jewish Question'.

If this subject seems dragged in by the hair to the unprepared reader, this is far from being the case. From very early on, antimasonism and antisemitism were like twin brothers: where the former appeared, the latter was usually not far away.[1521] Right after Barruel published his four-volume antimasonic classic, for instance, he received a mysterious letter from a person who described himself as an Italian officer from Florence called Jean-Baptiste Simonini, asking why Barruel had not made any mention of the involvement of *Jews* in the Great Masonic Plot he described. The letter disclosed that Mani and the Old Man on the Mountain had both been Jews, and that Jews had founded Freemasonry and the Illuminati. It also described a remarkable adventure the author claimed to have had with regard to this matter. While pretending to be Jewish, he had been approached by a Piedmontese Jew who offered him great sums of money and the position of an army general, if only he would become a Freemason. Barruel, it was said, had sent this letter to the Vatican in 1806 for its official opinion on the matter: Testa, the papal secretary, had allegedly responded that the epistle was certainly trustworthy. Although the letter was not published in print until 1879, it circulated in manuscript form before that date, influencing, among others, Joseph de Maistre.[1522]

Barruel had indeed planned a fifth volume to treat the Jewish aspect of the Masonic conspiracy, but had deliberately chosen to maintain a 'profound silence' on the involvement of Jews in the anti-Christian conspiracy. 'If they were to believe me, I could occasion a massacre of the Jews,' he jotted down in his private papers.[1523] This deficit, however, had since then been profusely compensated for. Virtually every Catholic antimasonic author of significance – De Mousseaux, Fava, Meurin, Kostka, De la Rive – published works on the nefarious manoeuvres of international Jewry as well. In these works, a few standard elements linked Judaism with Freemasonry. The first of these was the *religious* element. The worship of Satan and the antichristian ideology of Freemasonry ultimately derived from Jewish sources, according to these writers. The ancient stereotype of the Jew as 'prince of black magic' was clearly an influence in this. Frequently mentioned in this respect was the Kabbalah, the esoteric system of Jewish origin that had been a source of inspiration for nineteenth-century occultism. It also inspired authors of the Catholic reaction, but in an inverted sense. For them, it was the 'metaphysics of Lucifer'; a pagan deviation that had crept into Judaism from Canaanite or Chamite sources and had spawned the Talmud and the denial

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[1519] Geyraud mentions Crowley with emphasis in connection with the T.H.L.; cf. Geyraud, *Sectes & rites*, 128.

[1520] 'Au XIXe siècle, l'antisémitisme était aussi français que la baguette', Eugen Weber, *La France à la fin du XIXe siècle*, trans. Philippe Delamare (Paris: Fayard, 1986), 163.

[1521] The history of this myth and the real historical relations between Jews and Freemasons are treated in detail by Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe, 1723-1939*, trans. Leonard Oschry (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1970).

[1522] Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the elders of Zion* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, [1967]), 32; Bieberstein, *Die These von der Verschwörung*, 161-163. According to Bieberstein, the letter may have been fabricated at the instigation of Fouché, the head of Napoleon's Secret Police, in a deliberate attempt to hinder his superior's Jewish policies.

[1523] Bieberstein, *Die These von der Verschwörung*, 228; Wippermann, *Agenten des Bösen*, 52.

of Christ by today's Jewry.[1524] Various readings were given of how Freemasonry had become infected with this religion of the Devil. Some authors, following Freemasonry's own origin myth, held that Freemasonry had been imbued with it from its earliest beginnings with the temple builders of Solomon; others speculated that the Templars might have adopted the Kabbalah during their campaigns in the Holy Land; some thought that the Jews and their nefarious system had only started to infiltrate Freemasonry after the Revolution.[1525]
The second theme that linked Judaism and Freemasonry was the *political* element. For the authors we mentioned in our list, Freemasonry was the tool, or one of the tools, that the Jews utilized to seek world domination, the 'covert organisation' of 'militant Judaism'.[1526] It was the Jews who had animated the conjuration of the *philosophes* in the eighteenth century; it was they who had organised the French Revolution through their Masonic ground troops; they were still spreading liberalism and secularisation throughout Europe. Their purpose in this, according to some, had been to bring about the legal emancipation of the Jews. Had it not indeed been the armies of the French Revolution and Napoleon who first brought liberty and equality to Jews throughout Europe?[1527] For most authors, however, the ultimate aim of the Jewish conspiracy was not this limited. The ultimate purpose of the Jewish conspirators was the dechristanisation of Europe and the dismantling of Europe's Christian civilization. For those defending 'outraged tradition', the Jews thus came to hold hands with Freemasons as archetypical representatives of the Western Revolution.[1528]

One of the first authors to bring together these elements was Gougenot des Mousseaux, who we encountered earlier as a prominent Catholic antagonist of spiritism and occultism. In 1869, he published *Le Juif, le judaïsme et la judaïsation des peuples chrétiens* ('The Jew, Judaism, and the Judaisation of the Christian Nations'), a book that has been called 'the Bible of modern antisemitism'.[1529] In its 600 pages, Gougenot des Mousseaux denounced the Jew as 'the representative of the spirit of darkness on earth' and 'the true Grand Master of Freemasonry', which had reserved six of the nine places in its secret Supreme Council for Jews. Éliphas Lévi, 'the perfidious Cabbalist foe of the Church' with his 'Judaic nom de guerre', was again frequently cited to support this thesis.[1530] Using the Enlightenment philosophers to pave the way and the Freemasons as their pawns, the Jews had organised the French Revolution, and continued to organise new revolutions, in order to prepare the coming of the Jewish Messiah, the Antichrist. 'Therefore, and according to important confessions that numerous enemies of the Church have made, those antique Jews who Éliphas [Lévi] calls our fathers in science, and who Christ calls the prodigy of the Demon (*vos ex patre diabolo*) – that is to say: the fathers of the demonic church – have as offspring the elect of Judah in which we

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[1524] Roger Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Le Juif, le judaïsme et la judaïsation des peuples chrétiens* (Paris: Plon, 1869), 545. The description 'métaphysique de Lucifer' is used by Jean Kostka, *Lucifer démasqué* (Paris: Delhomme & Briguet, [1895]), 70-71.
[1525] Meurin, *La Franc-Maçonnerie, Synagogue de Satan*, 9; Kostka, *Lucifer démasqué*, 70-71.
[1526] Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Le Juif, le judaïsme et la judaïsation*, xxiii.
[1527] A. de la Rive, *Le Juif dans la Franc-Maçonnerie* (Paris: Librairie Antimaçonnique, 1895), 18-20.
[1528] This identification of Jews with the ideologies of the Western Revolution and with modernity in general was a distorted reflection of genuine historical realities, as Steven Beller, *Antisemitism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 23-39, convincingly argues. The Jews had profited in both social and economic respects from the emancipatory legislature brought about by the advent of liberalism; in addition, important strands of Europe's Jewish population came to identify themselves with the political and social program of the Western Revolution (or its radical outshoots, like socialism) during the nineteenth century. The same mechanism applied to other minorities, such as Protestants in France (cf. Cholvy, *La religion en France*, 90-92) and, to a lesser extent, Roman Catholics in the Netherlands (cf. Salemink, 'Politischer Katholizismus in den Niederlanden').
[1529] Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 46.
[1530] Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Le Juif, le judaïsme et la judaïsation*, 525-530.

are obliged to recognize the philosophers, the learned doctors, and the mysterious superiors of 'the great Cabbalist association known in Europe under the name of Freemasonry', which has as its aim the ruin of the Christian Church and of Christian civilization.'[1531]

In other respects as well, Gougenot des Mousseaux was epoch-making in anti-Semitism. While retaining the age-old accusation of human sacrifice and cannibalism, at the same time, he brought nineteenth-century anti-Semitism up to date, coupling the Jewish peril with the disturbing new realities of modernisation and industrialisation. The new steam transportation, for example, was part of Judaism's plan for world domination, making fast movement of Jewish people possible. But their instruments of control par excellence were money, banking, and the press.[1532] This amalgam would have a sad and sinister future on the European continent. Increasingly, Jews would be designated as a symbol for capitalism, globalisation, and modernity.[1533]

As the Masonic conspiracy theory itself had been, the introduction of the Jewish element in the great plot was the work of a concoction of Christian, and primarily Roman Catholic, authors. After Gougenot des Mousseaux's book, it became a near-permanent feature in the repertoire of Catholic antimasonism. Bishop Fava, who maintained that Freemasonry and other secret societies were governed by perhaps 'half a dozen individuals', mentioned the Jewish hypothesis in passing, declaring it 'plausible'.[1534] The indefatigable Clarin de la Rive devoted a whole book to the question, meant 'to demonstrate the intimate and secular rapports that exist between Jews and Freemasons and to establish with what ingenuity the former serve themselves of the latter to accomplish their base works that are as Cabbalistic as they are satanic'.[1535] The overall spirit of this literature can perhaps best be tasted by partaking of *La Franc-Maçonnerie, Synagogue de Satan*, the book by Léon Meurin, bishop of Saint Louis, who had gathered much of his wisdom on the true nature of Freemasonry sitting at the feet of Taxil. The title of his book – 'Freemasonry, the Synagogue of Satan' – was meant to be taken literally. The work was a dense volume on the Jewish, anti-societal, and satanic character of Freemasonry, illustrated with diagrams and schemata that gave it a semblance of sober science, with as central theme the bishop's conviction that the 'Jewish Kabbalah' was the true philosophical basis of the Masonic edifice. Meurin expressed the pious hope that as a result of his exposure of their slavery to the 'Pharisees', non-Jewish Masons would open their eyes and renounce their allegiance to the Masonic organisation.[1536] Towards the end of the book, his tone became more apocalyptic and grim. Looking into the future, Meurin wrote:

> It would not be the first time that we will see the wrath of the people, too long restrained, erupt and fall to regrettable acts of violence against the Jews. The Governments who are not yet completely taken hostage by the Sect, should take precautions against this menacing danger. It would be wrong not to envisage this with all required foresight.
>
> But what to do?
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> The expulsion of the Jews of one country means a lack of charity and justice towards the neighbouring countries, on which one lets loose this voracious vermin. It is also too hard a measure against those among the Jews who are not to blame for the crimes of the daring handful that exploits the nations by way of Freemasonry. It would be enough, we think, to forbid to Jews the profession of banker, merchant, journalist, teacher, doctor, and apothecary. It does seem just, moreover, to proclaim the gigantic riches of certain bankers national property, because it cannot be allowed that a single man can amass by financial manoeuvres in a whiff of time, a fortune that exceeds that of kings, a truly *national*

[1531] Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Le Juif, le judaïsme et la judaïsation*, 539.
[1532] Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Le Juif, le judaïsme et la judaïsation*, 491, 159-186,
[1533] Bieberstein, *Die These von der Verschwörung*, 156-169.
[1534] Fava, *La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 101.
[1535] Rive, *Le Juif dans la Franc-Maçonnerie*, 11.
[1536] Meurin, *La Franc-Maçonnerie, Synagogue de Satan*, 7.

> amount of capital, and thus deplete the country and the nation that offer him their hospitality.[1537]

In conclusion, Meurin also addressed the Jews directly, offering some undoubtedly well-meaning advice to the members of this stubborn nation who continued to close their eyes to the evident truth of Christianity. 'Do not expect, o Jews, that you can escape the calamity that threatens you once more! Your deicide nation has at this moment reached one of its apogees of power and prosperity that repeat themselves oft in your history, and that has to end, as always, in a great national tragedy. The day that crushes you, will see the dawn of a vital expansion of the Church, your victim, such as history has never seen before.'[1538]

Sentiments like these were not merely the domain of abstruse writers in obscure books. They were increasingly becoming a matter of mass politics in fin de siècle Europe. Some of the proponents of antisemite ideology used (or rather misapplied) the newest insights in biology and Darwinism to argue that the Jews were representatives of a different racial group that surreptitiously endangered the purity and supremacy of the superior nations of the West. All of them held to variants of conspiracy thinking that attributed an important and devious role to 'the Jews' (or a select inner core among their number) as hidden actors behind the scenes of European or global politics.[1539] In France, the vitriolic publicist Édouard Drumont (1844-1917) played an important role in this respect with his untiring and eloquent advocacy of the opinion that his country was secretly governed by Jews. Although Drumont was a Catholic by faith, politically and ideologically he can more properly be considered a nationalist. But while the Roman Catholic Church steadfastly rejected the racial variant of antisemitism as incompatible with offical dogma, ultramontane and intransigent Catholics were certainly not reluctant to sing their own versions of the great antisemitic song. *La Croix*, France's largest Catholic newspaper, proudly declared itself to be 'the most anti-Jewish paper of France, the periodical that carries the Cross, sign of horror to the Jews,': it had no inhibitions about sporting front-page headlines saying 'Do Not Buy From Jews'.[1540] As with the Catholic authors we quoted, alarmist theories against Jews were almost invariably coupled with allegations against that other powerful enemy, Freemasonry, to merge into one giant conspiracy 'of Masonic Judaism or of Judaic Masonry (ad libitum)', to quote the words of yet another Catholic journalist.[1541]

The new, antimodernist and anticapitalist variant of antisemitism was also wholeheartedly embraced by the Catholic social and corporatist movement.[1542] This had been the other side of

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[1537] Meurin, *La Franc-Maçonnerie, Synagogue de Satan*, 464.

[1538] Meurin, *La Franc-Maçonnerie, Synagogue de Satan*, 466.

[1539] The difference between the new, ideological anti-Semitism, and the older 'theological' anti-Judaism and ethnic prejudices out of which it grew, is maintained by many authors; see, for instance, Beller, *Antisemitism*, particularly 1-21. The distinction between a 'rassenbiologisch begründete Antisemitismus' and an 'allgemeine gesellschaftpolitische [i.e., 'conspirationalist'] Antisemitismus', particularly useful to understand the Catholic case, I owe to Theo Salemink; see, for instance, his article 'Die zwei Gesichter des katholischen Antisemitismus in den Niederlanden: Das 19. Jahrhundert und die Zeit zwischen den Weltkriegen im Vergleich,' in *Katholischer Antisemitismus in 19. Jarhhundert: Ursachen und Traditionen im Internationalen Vergleich*, ed. Olaf Blaschke and Aram Mattioli (Zürich: Orell Füssli Verlag, 2000), 239-257.

[1540] Giovanni Miccoli, 'Saint-Siège et antisémitisme durant le pontificat de Léon XIII,' in *The Papacy and the New World Order: Vatican Diplomacy, Catholic Opinion and International Politics at the Time of Leo XIII, 1878-1903 = La Papauté et le nouvel ordre mondial: Diplomatie vaticane, opinion catholique et politique internationale au temps de Léo XIII*, ed. Vincent Viaene (Bruxelles: Institut Historique Belge de Rome/Belgisch Historisch Instituut te Rome, 2005), 413-433, there 422; 'N'achetez pas chez les Juifs', *La Croix du Dauphiné* 3 (26 April 1895), 693:1.

[1541] P. Lautier, 'Nouvelle infamie d'une magistrature sectaire et vénale, aux gages et sous la coupe des Franc-Maçons et des juifs régnants en haine de 'Dieu et de l'Église, des catholiques et du Pape',' *L'Écho de Rome* 27 (5 February 1895) 29:1.

[1542] Miccoli, 'Saint-Siège et antisémitisme durant le pontificat de Léon XIII,' 413-415.

the coin to the new Catholic commitment to the social question that had found expression in *Rerum Novarum* and the Catholic worker organisations. Catholic mass organisations tried to mobilize Catholic workers by promising social justice, on the one hand, and pointing out the enemy, on the other hand, appealing to the age-old prejudices against Jews held by many of the lower class. This was by no means a phenomenon restricted to France. In Austria (another prominent motherland of antisemitism), the 'Christian Socialists' under Karl Lueger (1844-1910) wilfully and successfully exploited antisemitic sentiments to win lower and middle class votes. In Italy, the Jesuit *Civiltà cattolica* took the lead in spreading the idea of the Jewish-Masonic Plot and the secret Jewish World Government.[1543]
A few celebrity cases were indicative of the antisemite tensions that were rampant in fin de siècle Western Europe. The German Rhineland saw ritual murder allegations brought to court in Xanten in 1891 and 1892. In France, the nation was brought virtually to the brink of civil war because of the Dreyfus Affaire, the most notorious eruption of antisemitism in fin de siècle France. Albert Dreyfus (1859-1935) had been the first Jewish officer to become a member of the French general staff, when he was arrested in 1894 on charges of espionage and high treason, condemned on trumped-up evidence, and whisked away to the infamous Devil Island. This cause célèbre caused great upheaval, especially when the Naturalist writer Émile Zola took up his pen in defence of Dreyfus in 1898 with a famous open letter to the French presidency entitled *J'accuse*. While Republicans and left-wing politicians gradually rallied in favour of the banished officer, royalists, clericals, and right-wing nationalists made common cause in denouncing Dreyfus. Here again, antisemitism and antimasonism found each other in an inextricable embrace, helped by the fact that Dreyfus was not only a Jew, but also a Freemason.[1544]

What was the position of Léo Taxil in all this? Taxil had certainly not been an anti-Semite before his conversion to Roman Catholicism. From his time in juvenile detention, there exists a manuscript he wrote on religion in which he concluded that for those who could not do without some system of belief, Judaism might be the best option. 'You will be closest to the truth'.[1545] Even after his transition to Catholicism, Jews remained conspicuously absent among the groups Taxil targeted with his publications. His reluctance in this might have been enhanced by his confrontation with Édouard Drumont, the prima donna of French antisemitism. In 1890, both authors stood as candidates for a place in the Municipal Council for the Parisian district Gros Caillou; Drumont as an antisemite candidate, Taxil as a representative for the clerical party.[1546] Unsurprisingly, Taxil was swept from the field by his immensely popular opponent, and he retorted by writing and publishing an insulting 'psychological study' of Drumont. The latter responded in kind with a long article in which he rhetorically asked how the Church could possibly ally itself with a former blasphemer and pornographer like Taxil, citing extensively from Taxil's semi-pornographic novel *The Secret Loves of Pope Pius IX*. Sarcastically, he added: 'I hope the Jews, reduced to employing such a defender, have paid that wretch what is due to him.'[1547]
Drumont also accused Taxil of hypocrisy. Before the elections, he argued, the 'Catholic' publicist had proved himself significantly less philosemitic. He cited an article from *Le France chrétienne*, where Taxil had spoken about 'Masonic Jewry', and some more instances from Taxil's own periodical *La Petite Guerre* containing derogatory phrases about the Jews of Vienna.[1548] These citations were doubtlessly genuine, and *La Petite Guerre* had included

[1543] Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 52.
[1544] Cf. *La Croix du Dauphiné* 3 (3 January 1895) 595.
[1545] Laurant, 'Le dossier Léo Taxil,' 58.
[1546] Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 122n; Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 172.
[1547] Drumont, *Le Testament d'un Antisémite*, 408; quotes from *Les Amours secrètes de Pie IX* on pp. 420-421.

some mildly antisemitic utterances by other authors as well. Yet these had remained the exception rather than the rule. In general, Taxil held himself strangely silent on the Jewish Question.[1549] That at least was the opinion of a large part of his readers. Drumont and Taxil themselves might be mortal enemies; their readership was roughly identical. The correspondence of Taxil that is left to us contains numerous letters from parish priests and other Catholics imploring him to provide more elucidation on the Jewish share in the great antichristian plot. In another tone of voice, Taxil's friend Father R. Fesch urged him to tone down his attacks on Drumont. 'Considering Drumont,' the priest wrote, 'Do not write against him. The French clergy, who hold him in high esteem, will turn their back on you. You should consider this, believe me. There are still a lot of people out there who have not come back on their false ideas on your account: could this not be the way to convince them? I'll say it again, it is a friend who is talking to you, after having thoroughly reflected on the matter…'[1550]
This supplication suggests a firm opinion concerning the Jewish Question on the part of Taxil. In his publication contra Drumont, he had written that the greatest enemies of the Church (Luther, Voltaire) had also been the greatest antisemites, and proceeded to express his compassion for the victims of the Russian pogroms in terms that have stricken at least one historian as sincere.[1551] Nevertheless, somewhere around 1892, Taxil evidently ceded to the pressure put upon him. In one of the most grotesque turns of an already sufficiently grotesque history, 'Docteur Bataille' sternly admonished Taxil from the pages of *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle* on the subject of the Jews:

> A great fault of Mr. Léo Taxil, of whom I am far from sharing certain points of view, has been that he never carried his investigations to the field of Masonic Jewry. He would have discovered salient facts on the Lemmis, the Bleichroeders, the Cornelius Hertzs, and the other Israelite Freemasons who have succeeded in obtaining an important role in the leadership of the sect. Mr. Drumont, for his part, has been more astute, and it is probable that a false pseudo-brother, in whom he would quickly have scanned the Jew, would not be able to fool him.
>
> The secret agents of Lemmi, for the rest, are easy to recognise: in no matter what country, they possess, I repeat it, one distinctive mark that exposes them, for those that pay a bit of attention or keep themselves informed: *there is not one of them who isn't a Jew*.[1552]

The second volume of *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle* included a complete chapter of almost a hundred pages on 'The Jews in Freemasonry'.[1553] Taxil's later publications under the names of Margiotta and Vaughan also featured occasional rallies on the Jewish theme, mostly centred on the figure of Adriano Lemmi, whom Taxil graced with the ultimate insult of being a *convert* to Judaism.[1554] When Paul Rosen started to denounce his creations, Taxil did not shrink from sidetracking his competitor by consistently calling attention to his Jewish origins.

The most probable explication of this *volte face* is simply that Taxil was afraid he would loose his readers when he refused to meet their expectations about Jewish involvement in the Masonic plot. But in the strange world of Taxil, where every phrase is open to reversed interpretation, and vice versa, another explanation might also be valid. Perhaps Taxil was trying to make a virtue of a necessity and planned to entangle Drumont and the other apostles

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[1548] Drumont, *Le Testament d'un Antisémite*, 405-407.
[1549] 'Les maçons bourgeois, voltairiens et libres-penseurs iront rejoindre dans leur impopularité les juifs exploiteurs,' wrote, for instance, J. des Apperts, 'Le complot maçonnique,' *La Petite Guerre* 2 (11 March 1888) 59:3-4, there 4.
[1550] Laurant, 'Le dossier Léo Taxil', 59-60.
[1551] Closson, 'Le *Diable au XIXe Siècle* de Léo Taxil,' 316n.
[1552] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle*, 1:475.
[1553] Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX^e^ siècle*, 2:443-537.
[1554] Cf. Margiotta, *Adriano Lemmi*, esp. 189: 'Maçonnerie et judaïsme sont en Italie la même chose; et si je dis seulement: en Italie, cela ne signifie pas qu'il en soit autrement ailleurs.'; Margiotta, *Le Palladisme*, 78-81.

of antisemitism in his mystification as well. A letter that Margiotta showed to a journalist after his desertion of Taxil suggests this. It contained detailed instructions on how to lure Drumont into the trap of the Taxil mystification by using Margiotta as a decoy. 'Yesterday, I received pages 161 to 224 [of *Le Palladisme*], in well-printed quires,' Taxil wrote to Margiotta on 19 September 1895, 'I have immediately sent them, with express post, to Drumont, in Brussels: but I have indicated as sender 'Dispatch from Delhomme and Briguet, publishers at Paris'. In this way, you can write to him that you have let them be sent to him, and call his attention to the question of the role of the Jews in Masonry, on which he'll find some initial explications in the pages that he receives today.'[1555] This plan to set up Drumont failed, but it might give us a glimpse of Taxil's personal attitude in the matter. The master impostor, it seems, was hoping to get his revenge on his antisemite rival after all, if not through the front door, then through the back.

Léo Taxil was not the only one walking the tightrope concerning the Jewish Question. The Papacy, in a different way, was busy trying to do the same. Pius IX had not refrained from openly insulting Jews on occasion.[1556] Leo XIII, who was anxious to establish the position of the Papacy as a moral power and global arbiter, showed considerably more circumspection in public. While he continued, as we have seen, his predecessor's hard-line stance against Freemasonry, he did not issue any official or semi-official statements against Jews. On the contrary, his rare public utterances on the 'Jewish Question' suggested a break with the attitudes of his predecessor. On August 3, 1892, the pope granted an interview to the socialist and feminist journalist Sévérine, which the popular French daily *Le Figaro* published the following day under the title 'Pope Leo XIII and Antisemitism'. In the interview – which came to be known as the 'Encyclical for a Pence' – he expressed strong disapproval of any 'war of religion' or 'war of the races'. All people, regardless of ethnicity, Leo XIII argued, had a common descent from Adam and were equal to the grace of God. The pope solemnly vowed to provide the protection of the Papacy to the Jews should popular violence erupt against them. Meanwhile, however, the Church could not help to prefer its own children over those that obstinately preferred to remain in a state of impiety; and it also had a duty to protect the defenceless sheep of its flock against those that sought to oppress them – especially through the 'scourge of money'. 'They want to defeat the Church and dominate the people by way of money!' Leo XIII lashed out, 'Neither the Church nor the people will let this happen!' When his interviewer asked him if he was referring to the 'grand Jews' with this remark, the Pope skilfully evaded the question.[1557]

There was more than a whiff of Meurin and Gougenot de Mousseaux in this. Notwithstanding the fact that we cannot be certain of the personal opinion of Leo XIII, and that the official representatives of the Church maintained a prudent silence on the matter in public, the utterances of the Vatican behind the scenes suggest a certain picture. They make clear that the line of Pius IX was maintained regarding the Jews, especially in connection with the Masonic conspiracy – and also that the Papacy, by the final decade of the nineteenth century, had firmly chosen to place its bets on the popular Catholic movement, including the antisemitism that was an inevitable ingredient of it.[1558] Some even expressed the conviction that this would bring many a lost sheep back into the fold of the Church and considered it the best card to

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[1555] Letter from Taxil to Margiotta, 19 September 1895, quoted in Lorain, 'L'Entreprise Diana Vaughan' (BnF, Fonds Lambert, 31/78-79).

[1556] Miccoli, 'Saint-Siège et antisémitisme,' 418.

[1557] Sévérine, 'Le pape et l'antisémitisme. Interview de Léon XIII,' *Le Figaro* 38 (4 August 1892) 217:1. I follow here the analysis of Miccoli, 'Saint-Siège et antisémitisme,' 422.

[1558] Cf. Emiel Lamberts, 'Political and Social Catholicism in Cisleithania [Austria] (1867-1889),' in *The Black International/L'International noire 1870-1878*, ed. Emiel Lamberts (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 298-317, there 315.

play 'if one wants the Catholic movement, and thus the Church, to regain her lost hegemony over society'.[1559] Thus, in Austria, the Vatican came out in support of the antisemite Christian Socialists, and it was only due to the personal intervention of Leo XIII that their leader Karl Lueger was eventually allowed to become mayor of Vienna.

Although the innermost convictions of people will always remain beyond the pale of the historian, these silent nods in favour of anti-Jewish demagogy were clearly not just a matter of cold-blooded political manoeuvring. They also reflected sincere beliefs that could be found up to the highest echelons of the Church. In his missives to Rome, the papal nuncio in Paris, Monsignor Lorenzelli, often spoke of the 'judeo-masonic war' against Christianity; and Cardinal Rampolla's answers testified a tacit acknowledgment of its existence. Vatican attitudes become especially clear in its reaction to a scandal in Austria-Hungary, where the papal nuncio had praised a Jewish benefactor of Catholic workers, raising considerable brouhaha from the ranks of the Catholic antisemites. The Vatican responded by sending an official reprimand to its nuncio from the hand of Monsignor Boccali, the secretary of Leo XIII. 'It is too well known that the Masonic sect is nowadays intimately linked to the Jewish sect, to the detriment of the Catholic Church,' Boccali wrote, 'Knowing this, it would have been more prudent for the official representative of the Holy See to have abstained from these words of eulogy.'[1560] Even in 1900, when the Cardinal of Westminster asked the pope for an official rebuttal of the ritual murder allegations against Jews, the Vatican answer was a staunch refusal. The existence of these facts was held to be 'historically certain': moreover, it would be absurd to expect the Papacy to defend the Jews, the dominators of Europe.[1561]

By analogy, Vatican politics regarding anti-Semitism might teach us much about the Holy See's possible involvement with Taxil's antimasonic campaign. In both cases, we are confronted with a Papacy that kept its distance in its official manifestations, but seemed keenly interested to profit from 'spontaneous' eruptions of antisemitic or antimasonic sentiments in the background. Most clearly in the case of Catholic antisemitism, but probably also in the case of Taxil, the Vatican was not afraid to give a discreet hint to key people in the hierarchy and in lay organisations every once in a while in order to point them in the right direction. In both cases, there is nothing to suggest that the inner convictions of the Vatican were widely different from those of its flock; yet in both cases, political objectives were prominently involved as well. The mechanics of attribution and ostracism served to enhance the morale, cohesion, and popular appeal of the Catholic movement.

In France, more particularly, warlike rhetoric against Freemasons and Jews can be placed within a wider effort to paste together a Catholic community that was chronically divided as a result of the papal policy of ralliement. Here, the designation of a minority enemy might also function as a bridge to other conservative forces in the country's political spectrum, which, in turn, might bring about the alliance between Catholics and conservatives the Vatican hoped for, and thus the transformation of France into a political ally of the Holy See. With regard to these last-mentioned objectives, the Vatican proved to have placed its bets on a pair of Trojan horses. Taxil first radicalised the Catholic allegations against Freemasons until they became ridiculous and then turned the tables on the Catholics, inflicting severe damage on their public reputation. The Dreyfus Affaire – initially hailed by the nunciature as a god-given opportunity that would make clear to France the real extent of the Jewish conspiracy – eventually backfired against Vatican interests even more dramatically.[1562] Dreyfus's ultimate acquittal in 1898 was a triumph for Republican and left-wing France, and the upheaval created by the

[1559] Miccoli, 'Saint-Siège et antisémitisme,' 425; also 415.
[1560] Miccoli, 'Saint-Siège et antisémitisme,' 419.
[1561] Miccoli, 'Saint-Siège et antisémitisme,' 432.
[1562] Miccoli, 'Saint-Siège et antisémitisme,' 430.

scandal was instrumental in bringing the fiercely anticlerical Combes government to power, which broke off relations with the Vatican and continued the French secularisation drive with even more vigour than its predecessors.

by way of conclusion

What was the net result of Taxil's imposture? A definite answer to this question is hard to give. We can, however, tentatively discern a few sets of repercussions that followed the end of Taxil's adventure in 1897 like ripples in a pond. The first ripple was probably exactly what Taxil had intended with his deconstruction of Catholic attribution. The international press had a field day dwelling on the gullibility and paranoia of Catholicism; liberal representatives of the German Reichstag invoked the affair to point out once again the dangers of confessional education.[1563] Ultramontane antimasonism itself fell prey to disarray and utter disorientation in the immediate aftermath of Taxil's self-exposure. Rightly considering himself too deeply implicated, Amand-Joseph Fava, bishop of Grenoble, submitted his resignation to Rome (which was refused).[1564] The second international congress of Catholic antimasonism, originally planned for 1898, would never take place.

This first ripple of discomfiture, however, proved of extremely temporary nature. Taxil had confidently stated at the end of his press conference that he had effectively murdered his own creation of Palladism: but this statement immediately turned out to be premature. A number of Catholic antimasonists found themselves unable to accept the non-existence of their beloved Diana Vaughan, the converted Grand Mistress of Luciferianism. They took resort to the first reflex of any believer in conspiracy theories – to explain the unacceptable by designing a new conspiracy. Miss Vaughan, they suggested, had certainly existed, but had been – physically – assassinated by Taxil.[1565] Diana's former publisher Alfred Pierret was of this opinion, suspecting behind this foul deed the hand of the past subscribers to *Le Palladium régénérée et libre*, who had wanted to prevent her from revealing more damaging facts on their secret activities.[1566] Others maintained that Miss Vaughan was still alive, but had returned to the religion of her fathers and disappeared once more in the mysterious netherworld of international Luciferianism. Abel Clarin de la Rive – who had been so disorientated by the collapse of the Taxilian edifice that he had sought guidance from a clairvoyant – eventually adopted this view: in October 1897, he even reported that Diana Vaughan had been sighted in England.[1567] Up to the 1930s, certain circles of Catholic antimasonism were still discussing the possible existence of the elusive Grand Mistress.[1568]

Many more were confident that, once again, the machinations of Freemasonry were behind the whole affair. Already in the immediate aftermath of Taxil's press conferences, Catholic journalists had remarked on the 'strong atmosphere of the lodge and the secret police' that had hung around the final episode of the mystification.[1569] Why, for example, had the metropolitan

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[1563] Gerber, *Betrug als Ende eines Betruges*, 60.

[1564] Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 189.

[1565] The rumour seems to have surfaced first in an obscure publication by Gabriel de la Tour de Noé, *la vérité sur Miss Diana Vaughan la Sainte et Taxil* Tartufe (Toulouse: s.i., 1897), which I was unable to consult personally. This author was initially suspected by Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 195, to be another pseudonym for Taxil, but the Italian scholar withdrew this hypothesis in a later article ('Diana Redux: retour sur l'affaire Léo Taxil – Diana Vaughan,' *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* 4 (2004) 1:91-97, there 93).

[1566] Pierret in *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste* 2 (10 June 1897), 24:739, 753.

[1567] Laurant, 'Le dossier Léo Taxil,' 61-62. In *La France Chrétienne* (30 April 1897) 163, Clarin de La Rive suggested that Taxil had eliminated the real Diana Vaughan; cf Gerber, *Betrug als Ende eines Betruges*, 40.

[1568] Cf. Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme*, 195-197, 219-235. On 8 May 1897, De la Rive wrote a letter to the Abbé Bessonies, admonishing him not to retract completely on the point of Palladism. 'Croyez-moi, une fois, L. T. n'a put tout inventer et imaginer. Il y a du vrai, beaucoup de vrai et surtout beaucoup de mensonges intentionnels dans la conférence du 19.' Cf. Fry, *Leo Taxil et La Franc-Maçonnerie*, 250.

[1569] G L. Nemours Godré, 'La fin de Diana,' *La Vérité* (21 April 1897), consulted by me in BnF, Fonds Lambert,

police appeared instantly on the scene to protect Taxil when he left the building? The whole thing had been set up by Freemasonry from the beginning, with the express purpose of holding Catholicism up to ridicule. In this way, even Taxil's deconstruction of Catholic conspiracy thinking could be incorporated into the Grand Masonic Plot. But this was not all. Freemasonry, it was speculated, had also used Taxil to divert public attention from genuine diabolical practices that were going on within the fraternity. By mixing real facts with patent absurdities, Taxil had raised a smoke screen to cover up the former and make sure that every serious discussion about them was predestined to falter into hilarity.[1570] For Catholic investigators not deceived by this ploy, this meant that many facts about Satanism could be salvaged from the wreckage of Taxil's constructions.

Amongst the adherents of this thesis was J.-K. Huysmans. In an interview immediately after the explosion of the Taxil Affair, he declared that a 'swindle of somebody from the south of France' by no means proved the non-existence of Satanism and Luciferianism, and he referred to the publication of Bishop Meurin (obviously unaware of the origin of the latter's information).[1571] In his last substantial work of literature, a pseudo-hagiography of Lydwine of Schiedam that appeared in 1901, Huysmans painted a sinister picture of the Europe he was living in, with most of its countries dominated by the 'Jewish vermin' and the 'crocodiles of the lodges'. These in turn were under the command of the 'cult of Lucifer', whose existence, 'notwithstanding interested denials', was 'an undeniable, absolute, certain fact'.[1572] In this opinion, Huysmans was followed like a shadow by his protégé Jules Bois, that other self-styled expert on occultism, who incidentally converted to Roman Catholicism a few years later. In *Le monde invisible* ('The Invisible World'), Bois boasted that he had seen through the set-up of 'Taxil and doctor Hachs [sic], also known as Bataille' from the very start, but that amongst the 'unbelievable and seemingly crazy legends' of the duo, true facts had been mingled in. These facts apparently included the existence of both Satanism and Luciferianism; the worship of Baphomet by adherents of the latter; and also, 'according to documents considerably less reliable', the existence of a statue of Lucifer in the shape of a winged young man subduing the crocodile of monarchy and papacy; the location of Charleston as seat of Lucifer's most important sanctuary; and the position of Albert Pike as 'most recent reformer' of the Luciferian sect.[1573]

Both Huysmans and Bois were undoubtedly instrumental in keeping many elements of Taxil's mystification in circulation. Other authors would continue in their tracks, some of whom we will meet in the next chapter.[1574] But the rumour of Palladism, one suspects, was to a great degree liable to survive on its own. While the newspaper clippings on Taxil's final confession disappeared into the archives, the antimasonic books written by him and his epigones remained on the shelves of libraries and Catholic institutions. Even today, Taxilian inventions

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[1570] Gaston Mery, *La vérité sur Diana Vaughan: Un complot maçonnique* (Paris: Librairie Blériot, s.a.); Cahill, *Freemasonry and the Anti-Christian Movement*, 70n. See also Rousse-Lacordaire, *Rome et les Franc-Maçons*, 128; Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 216n. The Paris police in one of their reports suspected the whole thing to be a publication stunt to sell new American typing machines, a hypothesis that has not been followed-up by great numbers of historians. Cf. Weber, *Satan franc-maçon*, 214n.

[1571] Gerber, *Betrug als Ende eines Betruges*, 79, citing an interview with Huysmans in the periodical *XIX^e Siècle*. Cf. Billy, *Stanislas de Guaita*, 90, for a letter in which Huysmans stated similar convictions.

[1572] J.-K Huysmans, *Sainte Lydwine de Schiedam* (Paris: Plon, 1901), 224-226. See also Huysmans' letters to Henry Mœller from 23 June 1900 and 9 November 1900; Mœller, 'Joris-Karl Huysmans d'après sa correspondence,' *Durendal: Revue Catholique d'Art et de Littérature* 7 (1910): 493-502, there 494.

[1573] Bois, *Le monde invisible*, 161-181.

[1574] In addition, mention must be made of a publication by Edith Starr Miller, 'Baroness Lady Queenborough', *Occult Theocrasy*, 2 volumes (Abbeville: s.n. 1933), which did much to spread Taxilian notions in the Anglo-Saxon world. Geyraud, *Les religions nouvelles de Paris*, 158-161, and *Sectes & rites*, 120-121, also uncritically reproduces much material from Taxil, referring to Jules Bois as his source.

sometimes surface in the ultraconservative milieu of sedevacantist Catholics, and also, more surprisingly perhaps, in antimasonic publications against Freemasonry by extremist evangelical and Islamic groups.[1575] Thus one can suddenly see Lévi's Baphomet and Pike's 'secret instructions' reappear in a Christian comic book warning against the demonic danger of Freemasonry, with a footnote to Clarin de la Rive's *La Femme et l'Enfant dans la Franc-Maçonnerie Universelle* at the bottom of the page.[1576]

There can be no doubt, however, that these were and are minority views, held only by tiny groups of extremists. Even the majority of Catholic antimasonists silently abandoned the explicit Satanist hypothesis after Taxil's deceit came to light. The notion of devil worship by Freemasons was henceforth reduced to suggestive asides, as it had been before Taxil came on the scene. Yet this by no means signified the end of the idea of the Great Masonic Plot. After Taxil, Catholic antimasonism returned to its original hypothesis of a secret political and ideological conspiracy of Masons against 'Christian society' through the triple means of secularising governments, big money, and revolutionary agitation. The first four decades of the twentieth century would see the heyday of a Catholic antimasonism propagating the idea of a global Judeo-Masonic plot.[1577]

Nor would this concept remain the exclusive prerogative of Catholics for long. The mobilisation of the masses by anticapitalist and corporatist ideas, hierarchical authoritarianism, and attribution of societal ills to minority groups, proved a combination which could also be put to work by other political movements that fed on discontent with the Western Revolution. The only thing they needed to do was to replace the explicit Roman Catholic and ultramontane framework of their Catholic predecessors with other, usually nationalist allegiances. Already at the fin de siècle, as we have seen, the antimasonic theme was taken up by non-confessional politicians like Drumont, and later by the nationalist Action Française.[1578] And it was from Catholic antisemite propagators in Vienna that a commercially

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[1575] Cf. http://gestadei.bb-fr.com/actualites-f1/quand-le-plan-pike-est-applique-a-la-lettre-t586.htm, accessed 30 November 2010, where Bataille's *Le Diable au XIXe Siècle* is quoted; see also Introvigne, 'Diana Redux'.
Evangelical references to Pike's Luciferian instructions can be found in several of the infamous Chick tracts, for instance Jack T. Chick, *Spellbound?* (Ontario: Chick Publications, 1978), 26, where Lady Queensborough's *Occult Theocrasy* is given as a source. See also the references in the next note.
An example of Islamist references to Taxil can be found in the documentary *The Dark History of Satanism*, spread by the organisation of the Turkish fundamentalist author Harun Yahya (accessed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtpL_6zQ-K4 on 30 November 2010; see esp. 4.30-4.45).

[1576] Jack T. Chick, *The Curse of Baphomet* (Ontario: Chick Publications, 1991), [8], [11]. Before 1991, this footnote referred to '*The Freemason* (The organ of English Freemasonry), 19th January 1935', where Pike's apocryphal instructions had been cited with approbation according to a tenacious (but incorrect) fundamentalist legend (cf. 'Quelques erreurs des anti-maçons,' http://onvousment.free.fr/antimacons.htm, accessed 19 July 2012). *The Unwelcome Guest* (Ontario: Chick Publications, 2006) includes an identical page on Freemasonry, but here the reference in the footnote is changed to a book by Bill Schnoebelen.

[1577] Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 261.

[1578] Jarrige, *L'église et les Francs-Maçons dans la tourmente*, 202. On the *Action Française*, see Eugen Weber, *Action Française. Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1962), esp. 72, 200. For clarity's sake: Drumont was a believing (if troubled) Roman Catholic, and the Action Française recruited its following in large measure among Roman Catholics and pursued a Franco-Catholic agenda. Yet neither was a 'confessional party' in the strict sense of the word and both operated independently from Rome or the hierarchy; Action Française, as a matter of fact, eventually incurred an interdict by the Vatican.
Another ardent believer in the Judeo-Masonic-Communist plot was the Spanish dictator Franco, who ordered Freemasons to be summarily shot during the Spanish Civil War and later wrote a series of articles on the Masonic danger that were published, under the pseudonym Jakim Boor, as *Masonería* (Madrid: Grafica Valera, 1952). See José A. Ferrer Benimeli, 'L'antimaçonnisme en Espagne et en Amérique latine,' in *Les courants antimaçonniques hier et aujourd'hui*, ed. Alain Dierkens. Problèmes d'histoire des religions 4 (Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1993), 77-86, there 80-83; and Matthew Scanlan, 'Freemasonry and the

unsuccessful painter named Adolf Hitler adopted the idea of a Judeo-Masonic-Marxist conspiracy in the years before the First World War. An occasional turn of phrase in Hitler's autobiographical *Mein Kampf* still betrays the religious roots of his conspiracy theories: for instance, when he claimed he was 'defending the handiwork of the Lord' by sending the Jew 'back to Lucifer'.[1579]

Seen from this perspective, it appears possible that the overall result of Taxil's venture was the opposite of what he intended. As a result of causing Catholic antimasonists to strip their allegations of extreme religious elements such as Satan worship and diabolic apparitions, the adoption of their ideas by non-confessional movements was facilitated. At the same time, the antimasonic propaganda he successfully disseminated during the previous twelve years must necessarily have left some residue in the minds of ordinary Catholics, preparing them to believe the worst of Freemasons and their allies.[1580] In this way, Taxil may unintentionally have cooperated in laying a few of the sleepers for the ideological railroad tracks that would eventually lead to the great genocide of the twentieth century. 'They will end up by cutting our throats,' the Jewish banker Rothschild had already predicted during the anti-Semitic commotions of the fin de siècle.[1581] These words would prove to be prophetic.

Spanish Civil War,' *Freemasonry Today* (2004): 30.

[1579] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. James Murphy (Mumbai: Embassy Book Distributions, 2005), 58, 627. For antimasonism, see p. 295-296; for Hitler's own description of how he became acquainted with antisemitic ideas, see p. 51. Hitler often mentioned Karl Lueger as an inspiration for his political program. That National-Socialist ideas in this respect were rooted in the earlier conspiracy theories of reactionary Catholic authors is made plausible by both Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 25-45, 230, and Bieberstein, *Die These von der Verschwörung*, 189-232.

[1580] Andrey, 'La Croisade antimaçonnique (XIXe-XXe sicècles),' 183; Closson, 'Le *Diable au XIXe Siècle* de Léo Taxil,' 332.

[1581] Cited in Miccoli, 'Saint-Siège et antisémitisme,' 420.

Epilogue
Nineteenth-century religious Satanism: fact of fiction?

Es ist etwas Wahres daran, daß wir alle Satans Kinder sind.
Stanislaw Przybyszewski, *Satans Kinder*, Abs. I, Kap. II

Were religious Satanists active during the nineteenth century? In a broad variety of publications – ranging from personal memoirs to academic works, from pulp books to monographs on Satanism – the firm conviction can be found that underground groups of Satanists were operating during this period; and even, in the words of one historian, 'that this perversion seems to have flourished'.[1582] On closer inspection, all these statements, whether providing supporting evidence at all, turn out to derive eventually from the publications of Huysmans or those of Taxil and the wider repertory of anti-Masonic propaganda (e.g. Luciferians and Satanists, secret altars to Satan in Masonic temples). In Chapter III, we have conclusively shown that Huysmans did not have any first-person knowledge of actually existing Satanist groups. In the extensive personal correspondence that the French writer left to us, nowhere a hint of evidence in this direction can be found. For his ideas regarding a wide-spread practise of religious Satanism, Huysmans relied mostly on Boullan, who can be summarily dismissed as a reliable witness; while Boullan, in his turn, retrieved much of his information from the similarly unreliable Vintras. The fabricated stories spread by Taxil and comparable artists of misinformation can obviously not be admitted as evidence either. Up to now, other proof for a substantial movement of religious Satanism in the nineteenth century has not been forthcoming. The idea that such an underground movement existed can thus be referred to the domain of legend. Our findings in the last three chapters inevitably lead to this conclusion.

This conclusion, it may be clear, does not exclude the possibility that isolated individuals or groups were practising religious Satanism during the nineteenth century. It is impossible, for all practical purposes, to prove that something did *not* exist. All we can say with certainty, is that the assertions in the available literature regarding the actual existence of religious Satanism during this period do not stand up to critical scrutiny.[1583] In reality, as we have

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[1582] Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution*, 124-125. The most prominent example of an academic historian supporting this thesis is, once more, Massimo Introvigne, who quotes Griffiths with acquiescence in *Enquête sur le satanisme*, 100. Here again, Introvigne suggests the existence of an underground tradition of Satanism that existed long before Huysmans somehow discovered it and continued well into the twentieth century. See for instance his remark about Huysmans' black mass on p. 137 ('…il faut admettre [...] qu'elle est conforme à la tradition du satanisme qui la précède (depuis la procès La Voisin) et du satanisme qui la suivra.'), and about Satanism after 1897 on p. 209 ('Il y a encore, cachés quelque part, des satanistes héritiers de la tradition que Huysmans avait en quelque sorte eu l'occasion de connaître.'). It is clear from the substance of these statements that Huysmans (and consorts) is the only viable source for Introvigne. See also Introvigne's article 'Satanism,' in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 2:1035: 'The Satanists of the 1880s were not invented by Huysmans; they already existed, although they had admittedly only a few members in two or three small cults operating in France and Belgium.'

For some rather random examples of contemporary reflections attesting to the deep impact of the myth of fin de siècle Satanism, see for instance the memoirs of the Dutch actress Jeanne Schaik, who presents Huysmans' Satanism almost as a personally experienced reality (with reference, of course, to priests who have crosses tattooed on their foot soles and feed hosts to white mice; Jeanne van Schaik-Willing, *Dwaaltocht: Een stukje eigen leven* ('s Gravenhage: Nijgh & Van Ditmar, 1977), 82-85), or the travelogue of the well-known Dutch protestant politician Abraham Kuyper (*Om de Oude Wereldzee* (Amsterdam: Van Holkema & Warendorf, 1907), 1:26: '…wat van de satanistische orgieën der zwarte en blanke Mis nu nog in Europa voortkruipt, levert voldingend bewijs voor het doodelijk gevaar, waarmee de Oostersche, en nader Babylonisch-Semitische ontaarding op dit punt telkesn weer het Westen bedreigt.')

already remarked in an earlier chapter, the alleged 'flourishing' of Satanism in the fin de siècle primarily was a flourishing of people *talking about* Satanism.

This observation, of course, logically gives rise to the question *why* so many people concerned themselves with Satanism in this period. What caused this peculiar obsession with the worship of Satan? A proper response to this question exceeds the bounds of this study. But a few remarks may be made – which will conveniently serve to sum up much of what we have argued in the preceding chapters.

To start with, from early in the nineteenth century, Satan had been given political, ideological, and spiritual significance as a symbolic reference point by important members of nineteenth-century counterculture. The Romantic Satanists had used Satan to propose or discuss political and religious transformation in mythological form; anarchist thinkers had employed him as a metaphor to express anticlerical or antireligious sentiments; historians like Michelet had attempted to root these positions in a reconstructed pedigree of past Satanism. In the slipstream of Romantic Satanism, occultists like Lévi had displayed attitudes towards the fallen angel that were at least partly positive. This satanic rehabilitation remained present as a significant cultural substratum during the whole of the nineteenth century. In addition, the ideological program to which it was linked – the political, social, and religious conflicts brought about by the Western Revolution – remained relevant as well throughout this period. As a consequence, a portion of the population will certainly have been interested in, or at least not a priori dismissive of, the idea of a religious Satanism. One can detect this benevolent attitude in certain contributions to the secular and occult press, in which it was argued that a decent form of Satanism or Luciferianism should be perfectly allowable in this 'age of general toleration'.[1584] A stronger manner of adhesion was manifested by the individuals who sought to join the Palladism fabricated by Taxil. Pierret, the publisher of the movement's bulletin, reported several such cases; and probably a similar attempt had been made by the 'few members recruited from among atheistic Masons' reported by Papus to the correspondent of *Light*, the most notable of whom, according to the occultist, was 'a senator, who is a leading manufacturing chemist and Professor at the *Ecole de Medecine* of Paris'.[1585] More than one observer assumed that there would soon be 'a large and fashionable congregation' when the worship of Lucifer would finally come out in the open.[1586] This assumption, it is true, may have been linked to a more general perception of fin de siècle society as profoundly decadent. But all the same, one gets the distinct impression that at the end of the nineteenth century, a certain number of souls were ripe for a religious venture into Satanism. Apart from that, there remained the more traditional type of would-be devil worshipper who was willing to turn to Satan out of desperation from personal misfortune – as is attested by a delightfully naïve letter sent to a Masonic Lodge in Momberg, Germany, in which the writer declared himself prepared to become a Mason in order to gain riches. 'I reckon one will have to give oneself to

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[1583] It may be added, however, that more sober contemporary authors do not mentions Satanism in their overview of the nineteenth-century religious landscape; it is not included, for instance, in the 2 volumes by Alexandre Erdan, *La France mystique: Tableau des excentricités religieuse de ces temps* (Amsterdam: H.C. Meijer, 1858).

[1584] C. C. M., 'Luciferians and Freemasonry,' *Light: A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research* 15 (2 November 1895) 773:534-535. We already cited the journalist Émile Dehau: 'L'État laïque n'a pas davantage à proscrire, comme certains le demandent, un culte nouveau si ses adhérents respectent les lois de la société,' he wrote in his article 'Le culte de Lucifer' (*Charente* (13 April 1895), consulted by me in BnF, Fonds Lambert, 26//24).

[1585] Letter by Papus quoted in Q. V., 'Le Diable au XIXme Siecle,' *Light* 16 (16 May 1896) 801:231-232, there 231.

[1586] C. C. M., 'Luciferians and Freemasonry,' 534-535. 'Lucifer is another name for Light-bearer; and the world needs more light,' another occultist reacted on this statement – Africanus Theosophus, 'Luciferians and Freemasonry, ' *Light* 15 (16 November 1895) 775:557-558, there 558.

the devil (and I want to do that) and he will provide all the other things, money etc. Please write me immediately where and how I must proceed to become a member.'[1587]
Second, but not less important, was the continuation of the practice of attribution in the nineteenth century. In fact, the two phenomena were not altogether unconnected. As we have seen, the polemic attribution of their presumed preference for the diabolic had been a major incitement for some of the Romantic Satanists to identify themselves with Satan; and the intense preoccupation with the devil of an occultist like Lévi can doubtlessly be partly attributed to the same factor. On the other side of the spectrum, the sympathy for the devil expressed by several proponents of the Western Revolution was construed as a confirmation of their worst fears by some (Christian) opponents of this process of transformation. While a substratum of attribution had probably always persisted, the nineteenth century saw an unexpected resurgence of this phenomenon, particularly when the Roman-Catholic Church increasingly came to organise itself as a modern political and ideological force. Although traditional suspects as Jews, 'heterodox' Christians, pagan believers, (modern) magicians, and Freemasons remained the most important targets for allegations of devil worship, these allegations were now packaged in and part of a new ideological program that centred on the anxieties caused by the Western Revolution. The preoccupation with Satan was thus linked to very modern and very relevant political and social issues. In the first place among these were the entwined processes of liberalisation and secularisation. More in the background, broader, equally anxiety-ridden developments were sometimes included in the discussion, such as the rise of industrialization, capitalism, and mass society.[1588] Individuals or movements that promoted or were thought to promote these political and social tendencies belonged to the most explicit targets for allegations of Satanism. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, comparatively moderate, 'theological' forms of attribution (e.g. Freemasons were the tools of Satan without being aware of it) were increasingly replaced by more blatant accusations of intentional adoration of the devil – a process that was partly instigated, partly exploited by 'double agent' Taxil, as we have seen in the previous chapter. The result of this was an apprehensive interest in the subject of Satanism among conservative Christians, particularly within ultramontane Roman-Catholicism; an apprehension that must have reached its peak in the years of the Diana Vaughan affair, when all the latent fears of the faithful seemed to be corroborated.

When studying the public utterances about Satanism in the fin de siècle, however, one gets the marked feeling that for many people, fascination with the subject of Satanism did not derive from either of these crisp, ideologically motivated positions of sympathy or antipathy. Both camps, after all, encompassed only a minority of the population, especially in their more extreme variations. The keen interest in things satanic displayed by the general public thus must have had additional grounds. Some of them may be easily surmised from the narrative in the preceding chapters. First of all, the (misguided) idea of an 'ancient' cult surviving into modern times obviously gave people a thrill of gothic horror and gothic marvel. This idea of

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[1587] 'Ich denke, man muß sich wohl (und das will ich) dem Teufel verschreiben und der besorgt das andere alles, Geld usw. Bitte schreiben Sie mir sogleich, wo und wie ich dazu kommen kann, mich anzuschließen.' Quoted in Olbrich, *Die Freimaurer im deutschen Volksglauben*, 70-71, who mentions as its original source a Masonic periodical from 1914.

[1588] Cf. the way how Jules Bois connects Luciferianism, 'cet évangile de New-York', to modern technology in *Monde invisible*, 172-173, 179: 'Et nous avons le 'Dieu Bon' [Lucifer], dernier genre, c'est-à-dire le Dieu de toutes les licences, le dieu américain, qui porte dans ses bras non pas la rénovation des âmes par l'épreuve et les magnifiques devoirs du dévouement, mais les présent industriels, le téléphote, le télégraphe avec ou sans fil, le téléphone, les explosifs les plus formidables, l'automobile, le machinisme perfectionné, et jusqu'aux tables tournantes, jusqu'au la télépathie, le meilleur onguent et le meilleur fantôme! Il nous fallait le dieu compatissant à nos exigences nouvelles, le dieu du confort, le dieu de l'électricité et de la réclame.'

Satanism as a mysterious relict of a nebulous past was especially manifest in its depiction by Huysmans (who had become interested in Satanism as a possible escape from the inauthenticity of his own days, as we have seen), as well as in the different accounts given by occultist writers (a subculture displaying great fondness for secretly transmitted ancient traditions anyway). In contrast to texts from confessional sources, the actual involvement of Satan in his cult was often rationalized or skilfully left in suspense by these authors, making the descriptions much more plausible for a more or less secularised public. In this respect, the fin de siècle attention for Satanism continued, generally speaking, the tendency that we have already discerned in the late-seventeenth-century reports during or after the Affaire de Poisons: that of 'demystifying' the worship of Satan into an undertaking that was, at bottom, merely human. There was a difference, though. While the seventeenth-century reports had been fact-finding missions which sought to shine unprejudiced light on a subject that was still widely considered as the terrain of very real supernatural incursions, the late-nineteenth-century accounts, to the contrary, meant to tickle a readership living in a world that was thoroughly *entzaubert* by offering a choice sniff of magic. In this respect, the fin de siècle Satanist obsessions obviously fitted into a wider resurgence in things 'spiritual' and 'mysterious', which in many ways resembled the similar reaction that had become visible in Romanticism earlier in the nineteenth century.

At least as prominent in the appeal of fin de siècle stories about Satanism was the element of sex. Regardless of whether one reads the personal notes of a poet like Baudelaire, the 'supernaturalist' novels of Huysmans, the occult treatises of Lévi and Guaita, the historical reconstructions of Michelet, or the publications of (pseudo)Catholic agitators like Rosen, Taxil and Abel de la Rive, Satanism is invariably associated with sex. This association, as we have noted several times, was no novelty. Sexually 'inverted' practices had been a major ingredient of the Satanism stereotype in medieval and early modern times, and the lore and literature of this period was gratefully employed as a source for lurid sexual descriptions by authors like Huysmans or Guaita. Nevertheless one gets the impression that this element has a much more deliberate, almost autonomous role in the fin de siècle literature about Satanism. Sacrilege and Satan worship almost seem to become instruments for new varieties of sexual 'perversion', instead of the other way around.

This is not to say that this sexual element is generally treated as a positive element in the texts from this era. Far from it. Even a writer like Michelet, who closely approaches attitudes towards carnality that have become de rigueur in Western Europe after the Sexual Revolution, sometimes betrays great anxiety about the dangers of a full unleashing of the sexual instincts. With other authors, this anxiety can be described as a downright obsession. In the depictions of women – commonly conceived as more instinctual and 'animalistic' and less capable of controlling their natural urges – this fear of the incontrollable and unsettling empire of the instincts becomes particularly evident. In most cases, the association between the 'lower' drives 'down there', and the world of Satan and Satanism is thus not meant as a compliment, in contrast to the more bucolic treatments of this theme by some of the earlier Romantic Satanists, and by other authors that continued more fully in this tradition. At the same time, the Satanist association with dark, perverse sexuality was not without its own allure, and the texts that describe Satanism invariably seem to hesitate between repulsion and attraction, sometimes ending up on one, sometimes on the other side, but always fraught with ambiguity. Of course, as any good psychologist might remark, this ambiguity had always been inherent in pre-modern and early modern depictions of Satanism and similar 'monstrous' cults. Yet during the final decades of the nineteenth century, this ambiguity is clearly much more consciously evoked and much more consciously employed by authors writing about Satanism. The 'joy of descending' is explicitly described as such: i.e., a joy, but also a descent. The fantasy of sexual fulfilment without limits and the horror and revulsion of a world of moral

anarchy sliding into 'horrid bestiality' formed a combination that flavoured much of the fin de siècle descriptions of Satanism and provided a large part of their appeal.
This interest and anxiety regarding sex – although quite sufficient in itself as an explanation – was part of a broader anxiety about the moral state of society. Concern about the decline of moral vigour was a common feature of both the left and the right, one historian of the fin de siècle has noted.[1589] The idea of a wide-spread practice of Satanism was perfectly suited to this perception of degeneration – as a presumed social phenomenon, Satanism was 'vintage fin de siècle, my dear', as a Dutch novel about the subject remarked.[1590] In itself, the Satanist stereotype was a forceful reflection of the moral uncertainty experienced by living in a society that was more and more losing its traditional moorings in established religion. It vividly illustrated a range of questions that had gained increasing urgency as the century went by. What forms of human behaviour would appear when all morality had disappeared? Would a civilization that was absolutely free not spawn monstrous inversions of normal morality, such as Huysmans' Satanists? And would a society devoid of authentic spirituality and only venerating the fulfilment of sensual desires still be worthwhile to live in? (– Another question posed by Huysmans in *Là-Bas*, and answered in a way that was masterful in its sordidness.)
The trope of Satanism as the embodiment of complete antinomianism, as an incorporation of the *reversed world* where every moral rule is turned into its opposite, was of course practically as old as the concept of Satanism itself. In the nineteenth century, however, the poignancy of this age-old trope increased considerably as a growing number of philosophers, ideologues, and revolutionaries clamoured for exactly such a reversal of the established moral order, in a wild variety of ways. These were the days when Nietzsche started to raise his philosophical hammer, and it was no coincidence that Satanism was linked to anarchism and nihilism in many publications.[1591] For a small number of people rejecting the accepted values of nineteenth-century society, the spectre of Satanism might not have looked completely unattractive in this respect. Huysmans himself may have been among their number at an early stage. He was probably not exceptional in this regard: an inherent ambiguity between horrified indignation and peculiar fascination seems to have been typical for the attitude towards Satanism in his days. By its haunting vision of Satanism, society was looking at itself in the mirror, projecting mostly its fears and anxieties, but sometimes also its secret or not-so-secret dreams.

As the nineteenth century flowed over into the twentieth, an inevitable backlash of Satanism commercialisation and Satanism ridiculing seems to have set in. The *deconfiture* of the Taxil hoax will have played its part in this; but even without this, the great fad for occultism, decadence, and symbolism seemed to have wanes. In 1903, the French illustrated magazine *L'Assiette au beurre* ('Plate of Butter') dedicated an entire issue to the theme of Satanism and 'black Masses'. One of the illustrations which it contained, drawn by the Italian artist Manuel Orazi (1860-1934), showed a row of somewhat smug and sordid looking young men in black coats standing behind a naked woman stretched out on her belly, with a human skull positioned in the hollow of her back. The accompanying poem was entitled 'Deception' and told of frustrated adolescents vainly invoking the devil in their desperate quest for sexual thrills.[1592] Interestingly enough, Orazi had used a similar design just eight years ago to

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[1589] Weber, *La France à la fin du XIXe siècle*, 143.
[1590] Lapidoth, *Goëtia*, 2:68: 'Dat is 'eind-eeuwsch', mijn waarde.'
[1591] See again Bois, *Monde invisible*, 174: 'Une religion nouvelle est née, d'une part; c'est le Luciférisme; de l'autre un parti politique, l'Anarchie. Fruits amers d'un arbre cinéraire!'
[1592] *L'Assiette au beurre – messes noires* (12 December 1903) 141:[15-16]. The issue was mostly devoted to 'Satanism' in a metaphorical sense, predominantly in the form of the tyranny of money. Poem and picture are also reproduced in Zacharias, *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe*, 156, Tafel 35.

illustrate the sumptuous *Calendrier Magique*, an extravagant but not altogether jocular item of luxury that sought to cater for the then flourishing market for occult paraphernalia.[1593]
This dual tendency for commercialisation and ridicule was also exemplified by a curious and risqué 'dramatic reconstruction' of the black Mass throughout the ages that was staged at the Parisian Théâtre de la Bodinière on 17 February 1904. The text of the spectacle was published in a small brochure that included four black-and-white photographs of the tableaux vivants interspersing its performance.[1594] Huysmans, Michelet, and Lévi clearly served as direct or indirect sources of inspiration and information for its author, one Roland Brevannes. The first scene enacted the Black Mass of Gilles de Rais, celebrated on the back of a nude woman (played by an actress wearing a flesh-coloured body suit, as the accompanying photograph clearly shows) with fragments of consecrated hosts mixed with the blood of two children, the last one who died and the last one born; the chalice was supposed to be the skull of a parricide, footed by the horn of a buck that has copulated with a country girl. This was followed by the improper rites of La Voisin *cum suis*, with nothing much new offered except for the audacious suggestion of lesbian love between Voisin and La Trianon (while the possibility was also hinted at that the latter had in fact been a hermaphrodite). The third and final scene reconstructed a black mass 'in Paris, in our own days'. The modern black mass, if we are to believe the play, was in fact a strictly homosexual affair and meant to confront 'Love' and 'Death'. It was performed for a company of jaded and decadent upper-class gentlemen, giving occasion to conversations like this:

> Parnois:
> What special treat do you offer us tonight?
> Karl:
> We celebrate a black mass.
> Parnois:
> That is not *that* special, they are celebrated from time to time in Paris.
> Axel:
> Have you ever seen one?
> Parnois:
> Quite recently – down there, near to the Pantheon.
> The Marquis:
> I know what you intend to talk about. These are base debaucheries that have nothing in common with the magnificent sacrileges of our forefathers. I have said 'magnificent', and I maintain: atheism can only be truly grand in times of faith. Today, one does not even know what a proper orgy is anymore. The followers of Satan make me laugh, even when they write his name with an h.[1595]

[1593] Austin De Croze, *Calendrier Magique* (Paris: L'Art Nouveau, 1895), 19 [August]; consulted on http://fantastic.library.cornell.edu/imagerecord.php?record=236, accessed 17 Augustus 2012.

[1594] Roland Brevannes, *Les Messes Noires: Reconstruction dramatique en III parties et IV tableaux. Donnée au Théâtre de la Bodinière, le 17 février 1904* (s.l., s.i. s.a.). According to the title page, the performance of the play had been accompanied by music composed by René Brancour.

[1595] Brevannes, *Les Messes Noires*, 25:
'Parnois: Quel régal nous offrirez-vous cette nuit ?
Karl: Nous célébrons une messe noire.
Parnois: Ce n'est pas si nouveau, on en dit de temps en temps à Paris.
Axel: Vous en avez vu ?
Parnois: Naguère, tout là-bas, aux abords du Panthéon.
Le Marquis: Je sais de quoi vous voulez parler. Ce sont de basses débauches qui n'ont rien des magnifiques sacrilèges de nos aïeux. J'ai dit 'magnifiques' et maintiens, l'athéisme ne peut être grand que dans les siècles de foi. Aujourd'hui on ne sait même plus ce que c'est qu'une orgie. Les fidèles de Satan me font rire, même quand ils écrivent son nom avec un h.'
The mention of the Pantheon may have been inspired by Bois, *Petits religions*, 104, who also talks about black masses held 'non loin du Panthéon' (unfortunately without any further specification).

The scene descends into the burlesque when two women enter incognito, later followed by the police. When the latter are told by the attendants that they were in the process of celebrating a 'modernized black Mass', the inspector of police recounts that in the Middle Ages, this would have earned them the stake; under Louis XIV, the Bastille; but now, he will simply say: 'montrez-moi ça' – 'show me that thing.'

As the nineteenth century flowed into the next, however, the first spurious manifestations of a more serious preoccupation with Satan become visible as well. Two possible cases of isolated religious Satanism, both dating from the very end of the nineteenth and the threshold of the twentieth century, have recently be presented to the scholarly community by the Swedish historian Per Faxneld. The first of these is the Polish author Stanislaw Przybyszewski (1868–1927), a now largely forgotten decadent and expressionist writer who had been a figure of some note in Polish, German, and Scandinavian avant garde circles of the fin de siècle (he befriended August Strindberg and Edvard Munch).[1596] Przybyszewski was a prolific writer of novels, essays, and prose poems, mostly in German, and in many of these works, Satanism played a substantial role. As had been the case with many of his contemporaries, Przybyszewski's source of inspiration in this had been his reading of Huysmans, as he freely admitted himself.[1597] One of the first works of the Polish author in which Satan played a prominent part was the novel *Satans Kinder* ('Satan's Children'), which appeared in 1897, the same year in which Taxil unmasked his Palladism hoax. In the vein of Dostoyevsky's *Demons*, it tells about a small group of nihilist anarchists who plot to overthrow the established order in a German town by burning down vital edifices like the town hall and a factory. The central character in the plot is a young man named Gordon, the most radical of the conspirators, who is not interested in building a better world, but rather promulgates destruction for its own sake. In a significant scene in the book, he seems to confess his belief in Satan, 'because Satan is older than God'; although he denies that he is a 'Palladist', he declares to know 'the sect very well' and to agree with its 'essential principles'.[1598]
In Gordon and his love for wanton destruction, Przybyszewski seems to have attempted to give a description of Huysmans' secret Satanists 'aspiring to destroy the universe and reign over the ruins' – but this time, significantly, from the inside out. In his description of these nihilist Satanists, he is not unambiguously negative. Classic elements, for instance, from Romantic Satanism reappear: the 'children of Satan' from the title, for instance, are defined in compassionate terms as 'everyone who has fear, everyone who is desperate, who gnashes his teeth in powerless fury, everyone who is on the way to prison, everyone who is hungry and is humiliated, the slave and the syphilis-stricken gentleman, the whore and the pregnant maiden left by her lover, the convict and the thief, the writer without fame and the actor who is whistled from the stage'.[1599] Elsewhere, Gordon makes the ultimate Romantic equation and

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[1596] As mentioned, my account of Przybyszewski is mainly based on Per Faxneld, 'Witches, Anarchism, and Evolutionism: Stanislaw Przybyszewski's fin-de-siècle Satanism and the Demonic Feminine,' in *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*, ed. Per Faxneld and Jesper Petersen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) , 53-77, with additional insght from Josef Dvorak's introduction to Stanislaw Przybyszewski, *Die Synagoge Satans: Entstehung und Kult des Hexensabbats, des Satanismus und der Schwarzen Messe* (Berlin: Verlag Clemens Zerling, 1979).

[1597] Przybyszewski describes Huysmans as 'eine Zeitlang Herr über meine Seele' in his memoirs and mentions Certains and Là-Bas with emphasis; see Stanislaw Przybyszewski, *Ferne komm ich her…: Erinnerungen an Berlin und Krakau*, trans. Roswitha Matwin-Buschmann. Studienausgabe Werke, Aufzeichnungen und ausgewählte Briefe, 7 (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1994), 107, and Dvorak in Przybyszewski, *Die Synagoge Satans*, 21-22. Huysmans' influence on him can be made tangible in many ways: like the French writer, for instance, he also wrote an essay on Rops (cf. Faxneld, 'Witches, Anarchism, and Evolutionism,' 71-72; the quotations by Faxneld suggest that Przybyszewski was merely paraphrasing Huysmans in his treatment of the Belgian artist).

[1598] Stanislaw Przybyszewski, *Homo Sapiens (Unter Bord. Unterwegs. Im Malstrom). Satans Kinder*. Studienausgabe Werke, Aufzeichnungen und ausgewählte Briefe, 8 (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1993), 321-322.

defines his deity simply as one's self – which is understood by him, in contrast to the more collective Romantic concept of 'Humanity', in a strictly individualist way.[1600] Nor does it suffice to draw a simple line between characters like Gordon and their author. Przybyszewski was decidedly left-wing himself: as Faxneld argues, many ideas that he put into the mouth of Satanists like Gordon were repeated as his own in his non-fiction works, which seem to form a continuum with his novels.[1601]

One of these non-fiction works appeared in 1900 and was entitled *Die Synagoge Satans* ('The Synagogue of Satan').[1602] It was clearly inspired by and partly based on Jules Bois' *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, and shared a similar ambiguity towards its subject.[1603] It opened with a discussion of Satan that closely followed Bois in distinguishing several manifestations of the fallen angel. As 'Satan-Thot', he was the origin of (esoteric) knowledge and the 'Father of Science'; as 'Satan-Pan', he was the embodiment of nature and 'earthly beauty'; as 'Satan-Satyr' or 'Satan-Phallus', he was the god of sexuality.[1604] Like Lévi had argued about the 'magical agency', Przybyszewski claimed that Satan's powerful force could only be 'beschwören' (a German word that means both to invocate and to control or subdue) by a disciplined elite of the intellectually advanced. When the masses tried to do this, the result was only free play for the lower instincts.[1605] A particular example of the latter could be seen in early modern witchcraft, which was described by Przybyszewski as 'horrid up to bestiality', with added graphic details to match. The witch persecutions, he maintained, had been a legitimate form of self-defence on the part of society: although Przybyszewski admitted that innocent people had died, the majority of the eight million witches (sic!) had not been executed without reason.[1606]

Information about these practices in his own days was scarce, the Polish writer continued. His most important source for contemporary forms of Satanism was once again Huysmans; Przybyszewski explicitly referred to 'his immortal *Là-Bas*' and to Huysmans' introduction to the book of 'Jules Blois'. After making cursory mention of the Taxil hoax, Przybyszewski followed the latter in his assertion that the 'sect of Satan-worshippers' was divided in two factions nowadays: firstly, the Luciferians or Palladists, whose doctrine amounted to a simple

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[1599] Przybyszewski, *Satans Kinder*, 351: 'Jeder, der Angst hat, jeder, der verzweifelt ist, der die Zähne in ohnmächtiger Wut aneinanderbeißt, jeder, der das Zuchthaus streift, jeder, der hungert und demütigt wird, der Sklave und der syphilitische Herr, die Hure und das geschwängerte Mädchen, das von ihrem Liebhaber verlassen wird, der Sträfling und der Dieb, der Literat, der keinen Erfolg hat, und der Schauspeiler, der ausgepfiffen wird'. Compare 322: 'Alle, die verzweifelt sind, die Angst haben, deren Gewissen beladen ist …'

[1600] Przybyszewski, *Satans Kinder*, 322-323. Compare Gordon's fulminations against the idea of 'Menschheit' on p. 339.

[1601] Faxneld, 'Witches, Anarchism, and Evolutionism,' 55; in his autobiographical memoirs, for instance, Przybyszewski explicitly attests to his love and compassion for 'den armen, enterbten Kindern Satans' in similar terms as in his novel – Przybyszewski, *Ferne komm ich her*, 75.

[1602] Przybyszewski, *Die Synagoge Satans*. The book was actually based on a series of articles Przybyszewski had published in 1897.

[1603] Bois' book (or rather Huysmans' introduction to it) is mentioned explicitly on p. 118. I think that the book of Bois was Przybyszewski's direct source for the composition of *Die Synagoge Satans*, and not Michelet's *Sorcière*, as Faxneld suggests. However, the difference is largely academic, as Bois extensively paraphrases Michelet; moreover, it is very well possible that Przybyszewski *also* read *La Sorcière*. For some historic episodes, Przybyszewski utilized other publications as well: he mentions G. Legué's *Médecins et empoissonneurs au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1895), as his source of information for the Affair of the Poisons, although without adopting this author's antisemitic reading of historic Satanism.

[1604] Przybyszewski, *Die Synagoge Satans*, 30, 33; compare 72.

[1605] Przybyszewski, *Die Synagoge Satans*, 72.

[1606] Przybyszewski, *Die Synagoge Satans*, 83, 111. In his memoirs, Przybyszewski linked his continuing fascination with witches with traumatich experiences during his childhood in Poland involving a servant girl living in his parents' household rumored to be an 'ulicka' (witch); see Przybyszewski, *Ferne komm ich her*, 188-193.

reversal of Roman-Catholicism, with Lucifer replacing 'Adonai' as the good god ('it must remain an open question in which relation exactly they stand to Italian Freemasonry,' Przybyszewski added); secondly, Satanism proper, or the veneration of the fallen angel as representative of evil.[1607] 'Leaving aside purely artistic additions', *Là-Bas* remained, of course, 'a first class document' for the practices of the last-mentioned group.[1608]

It is evident from this description that Przybyszewski did not consider himself part of or attracted to these Satanist movements. Nevertheless he and his circle styled themselves on occasion as Satanists – we will return to this in the next paragraph – and this is one of the most important reasons for Faxneld to consider him as such as well. In addition, Faxneld argues, Przybyszewski developed a more or less coherent philosophy or spirituality in which Satan played a major symbolic role, amounting to 'what is likely the first attempt ever to construct a more or less systematic Satanism'.[1609] Interestingly enough, moreover, Przybyszewski was probably the first to connect Satanism with both the philosophy of Nietzsche and social-Darwinism, two strands of thought that would come to play a prominent role in later religious Satanism. Although he professes his contempt for Nietzsche as ultimately bourgeois, Gordon in *Satans Kinder* can be seen as a living example of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* such as Przybyszewski might have understood him: somebody who is free from all traditional morality and, by the time the novel ends, also liberated from the restraints of pity or petty love for the human 'canary birds' of this world. In *Die Synagoge Satans*, Nietzsche is explicitly connected with Satan as part of a catalogue of those who bring liberty under the aegis of the fallen angel: 'In Satan's name did Nietzsche teach the revaluation of all values; in his name the anarchist dreams of reshaping the world of laws; in his name, the artist creates […].'[1610] This panegyric reflects Przybyszewski's real life opinion about the 'Philosopher with the Hammer', of whom he was an ardent and early admirer.[1611]

Like many intellectuals of his day, Przybyszewski was also deeply influenced by evolutionism and social-Darwinism. But whereas most of his contemporaries used these scientific or pseudoscientific theories to express fashionable apprehensions regarding 'degeneration' and loss of racial strength, Przybyszewski adopted an undeniably original take on the subject. For him, it was the evolution of the mind that was most important, and in this evolution, it were precisely the mad, the neurotic, and the hypersensitive artist that might provide the genetic variations which would lead to the new human being of tomorrow.[1612] Przybyszewski had already described his ideas regarding human evolution in one of his first works of literature, the prose poem *Totenmesse* ('Requiem Mass') from 1893. This publication told in semi-biblical manner how the world had originated with 'das Geslecht', a German word best translated in this context with sex drive or libido in its broadest possible sense. 'In the beginning was the libido. Nothing outside it – everything within it.'[1613] In its

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[1607] Przybyszewski, *Die Synagoge Satans*, 118(n) ('in welchem Verhältnisse sie zu der italienische Freimauerei stehen, bleibt dahin gestellt').

[1608] Przybyszewski, *Die Synagoge Satans*, 169: 'abgesehen von rein künstlerischen Zutaten, ein Dokument ersten Ranges'.

[1609] Faxneld, 'Witches, Anarchism, and Evolutionism,' 74.

[1610] Przybyszewski, *Die Synagoge Satans*, 71: 'In Satans Namen hat Nietzsche die Umwertung aller Werte gelehrt, in seinem Namen träumt der Anarchist von der Umgestaltung der Welt der Gesetze, in seinem Name schafft der Künstler […].' In a later work, Bois would also list Nietzsche among the authors who had prepared the way for 'modern' Satanism; cf his *Monde invisible*, 176.

[1611] See for instance his adulatory description of his visit to the old and demented Nietzsche in Przybyszewski, *Ferne komm ich her*, 149.

[1612] See for instance the preface to Stanislaw Przybyszewski, *Totenmesse* (http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/2799/1, accessed 11 August 2012).

[1613] Przybyszewski, *Totenmesse*, chapter I: 'Am Anfang war das Geschlecht. Nichts außer ihm – alles in ihm.'. Faxneld already points out the striking similarities between Przybyszewski's and Freud's ideas in these and other respects.

desire to propagate and copulate, the libido evolved in myriads of life forms, until it finally spawned the brain, and within the brain, the human soul. Although the soul, according to Przybyszewski, is the apotheosis of its evolution, it also means a kind of suicide for the libido. Because it is self-conscious, the soul can rise above and cut itself off from the libido, thereby creating a sphere of being not dominated by the libido. In this way, however, the soul also spells its own end, because biologically, life can only persist by the libido. This is the human predicament, which is at the same time the crowning achievement and the swan song of the libidinous life-creating force. Because the soul sustains itself on the libido and the physical, and at the same time rises above it and seeks to detach itself from its limitations, conflict between man's different drives is inevitable, and the fate of human beings, Przybyszewski suggested, is intrinsically bound to suffering.

How systematic this complex of ideas was connected to Satan by Przybyszewski is still insufficiently explored. The Polish author's continuing sympathy for Satan, however, is well-attested. His openly declared tendencies in this direction may even have resulted in the formation of a rudimentary group of like-minded 'Satanists': after 1898, when Przybyszewski had returned to Poland, a circle of disciples gathered around him that took on the name 'Children of Satan', after his eponymous novel.[1614]

As Faxneld already notes, it was Romantic, literary Satanism that provided the core of the Satan that Przybyszewski venerated.[1615] This veneration, however, was not without deep ambiguities. If we follow our earlier dissection of the Romantic Satan, it could be said that Przybyszewski the left-wing poet was unabashed in his enthusiasm for Satan as the patron of liberty and as champion of the oppressed – sentiments which he unencumbered managed to combine with Nietzschean elitism and social-Darwinist ethics. (The 'oppressed' he chiefly talked about, in fact, were the writer and artist who are now marginalized but contain the seed of the 'new human' of tomorrow.) He was also uninhibited in his admiration for 'Satan-Thot', the father of science and of the human drive for knowledge. More complex, however, was his relationship with Satan as a symbol of sex and nature. This had everything to do with his ambiguous attitude towards 'das Geslecht', and by extension, to the natural world that was dominated by it. In some passages in *Totenmesse* and *Die Synagoge Satans*, Przybyszewski seemed to express a positive appreciation of man's and nature's instinctive drives, and thus of Satan's patronage of them. The libido was, after all, what sustained life and made humanity's spiritual accomplishments possible. More dominant in his works, nevertheless, was a typical fin de siècle attitude of disgust and apprehension towards the life of the instinct. In *Die Synagoge Satans*, the gruesome excesses of historical and contemporary Satanism are invariably coupled to 'das Geslecht': 'The libido alone is responsible for all these manifestations'; 'In the abysses of the libido, everything is possible […].'[1616] Echoing Lévi, Baudelaire, Huysmans, Bois, and many more, Przybyszewski argued that Satanism offered only one remedy for 'desperate Humanity': the 'delirium' of a total abandon to the libido. 'That is the only Satan Paraclet: *énnivrez-vous*.'[1617] It is clear, however, that it was in his

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[1614] Faxneld, 'Witches, Anarchism, and Evolutionism,' 63.

[1615] Faxneld, 'Witches, Anarchism, and Evolutionism,' 59.

[1616] Przybyszewski, *Die Synagoge Satans*, 123: 'Das Geslecht allein ist die Grundlage aller dieser Erscheinungen'; 119: 'In den Abgrunden des Geslechts ist alles möglich […].'

[1617] Przybyszewski, *Die Synagoge Satans*, 125: 'Das ist der einzige Satan Paraklet: ennivrez-vous.' This ambiguous but ultimately dismissive attitude towards the 'natural instincts' is reflected in his attitude towards women, which he sees, in common with most of his contemporaries, as essentially instinctive creatures, and thus harmful to man's spiritual evolution. I am not convinced by Faxneld's ingenious assumption that, because of the fact that he may have been a Satanist, Przybyszewski's many misogynist utterances must be read as 'semantic inversions' that are really intended as compliments. Faxneld himself also notes that 'an ambivalent attitude towards women is present throughout Przybyszewski's oeuvre, and some of his descriptions of the gruesome crimes of medieval witches are hardly intended as eulogy' ('Witches, Anarchism, and Evolutionism,' 75).

spiritual development that Przybyszewski saw man's most important sphere of activity: the Satan of human instinct must be subdued or at least controlled by the Michael of his intellect.

Our analysis is borne out by the most explicit articulation by Przybyszewski of his Satanism, in the personal memoirs he wrote many years later during the 1920s. 'To what amounted my cult of Satan?' the Polish author asked in this publication, 'The spirit of refusal, the Promethean spirit, the patron and emblem of all free spirits who refuse to be subdued to the yoke of what is useful for society and allowed by lawful norm; the spirit that refuses to be enchained by a narrow, rachitic dogmatism, but strives to ever greater perfection – naturally at the expense of the ethics of officialdom – and would like to lead the spirit of humanity into the festal day of freedom; this spirit the established churches call Satan, Lucifer, Baphomet […]. Well, it is this symbol that is adopted by artists when they crush dogmas or penetrate into the tremendously wide expenses of the human soul over which dogmatism has pronounced its strictest anathemas and interdicts.'[1618] In the subsequent pages, Przybyszewski mentioned or quoted a great number of classic 'diabolical' authors as representatives of his Satanism, including Byron, Baudelaire, Carducci, Huysmans, and the Polish poets Juliusz Słowacki and Adam Mickiewicz. 'My Satanism is the belief of Slowacki,' he declared, 'that not God, but only the human spirit can work wonders.'[1619] On the same page, he approvingly cited a text by Mickiewicz in which the fallen angel is represented as the first one to separate himself from the 'All-Unity' of the divine and thus establish his own individuality and independence.

This suggests that the Satan Przybyszewski admired roughly corresponded to the Lucifer of Byron, that is, the human capacity to transcend the merely natural by the boundless aspirations of his spirit. In other places, however, the Polish author seems to have propagated a kind of synthesis or balance between man's dual inclinations, a marriage between libido and mind, between the natural and the spiritual. One of the domains where this marriage was possible for Przybyszewski might be that of art, which is also a seemingly redundant excreta of the libido, but in contrast to the pure world of the spirit not thought of as sterile or suicidal, 'while in her the mighty pulse of the living libido, the fever-hot sperm-wave of light, the will to personal immortality quivers.'[1620] Przybyszewski's own Satanism, it might be superfluous

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[1618] Przybyszewski, *Ferne komm ich her*, 222: 'worin bestand mein Satanskult? Den Geist der Auflehnung, den Prometheischen Geist, den Schirmherrn und das Wappen aller freien Geister, die sich nicht ins Joch all dessen spannen lassen, was der Gesellschaft bützt und die einzige rechtsgültige Norm darstellt, jenen Geist, der sicht nicht vn einem engen, rachitischen Dogmatismus an die Kette legen läßt, sondern nach immer größere Vervollkommung – natürlich auf Kosten der amtlichen ethik – strebt und den Geist der Menschheit in den Sonnentag der Freiheit geleiten möchte, nennen die amtlichen Kirche Satan, Luzifer, Baphomet […]. Nun, und dierser Symbole bedienen sich die Künstler, wenn sie Dogmen stürzen oder wenn sie zumindest in die Räume, in die ungeheuer weiten Raüme der menschlichen Seele vordringen, über die der Dogmatismus strengste Anathemen und Interdikte verhängt hat.'

[1619] Przybyszewski, *Ferne komm ich her*, 223 ('Mein Satanismus – das ist Slowackis Glaube, daß nicht Gott, sondern allein der menschliche Geist wunder vollbringen kann.'); translation from Faxneld, 'Witches, Anarchism, and Evolutionism,' 61. Juliusz Słowacki (1809-1849) was a Polish Romantic poet who had become much *en vogue* in Poland among Przybyszewski's generation. Przybyszewski here is doubtlessly alluding to 'The Genesis of the Spirit', a philosophical and autobiographical prose poem that had been received in a vision by the Polish bard during a stay in Bretagne in 1841 (a complete French translation by Stéphane Danysz may be found on http://slowacki.chez.com/, accessed by me on 11 August 2012). The text told about the evolution of the spirit or soul out of a succession of anorganic and organic modes of being. This evolutionist aspect must have appealed to Przybyszewski; but contrary to what he suggests in his memoirs, Słowacki did not describe this evolution as a purely natural process; rather, the human spirit was an emanation of the deity, and the principle of sacrifice, as exemplified in Jesus, was the great lever by which humanity could return to the divine, enabling it to evolve in a still more spiritual and super-natural direction.

'The Genesis of the Spirit' was the obvious model for Przybyszewski's *Totenmesse*; comparing the two texts is very instructive regarding the similarities and differences between the Romantics and the fin de siècle avant garde.

to add, was also exclusively a matter of literature and art. In his memoirs, he spoke scathingly of reviewers and literati who were only able to conceive Satanism on the lines of the 'stupid and rascally swindle of a Léo Taxil and his illusionary, probably completely inexistent assistant Miss Diana Vaughan'.[1621] His own cult of Satan, he remarked ironically, was a cult without black Masses, mysterious rites, sadistic outrages, theft of sacramental wafers or blood of premature babies. 'What a poor, boring and prosaic Satanism!'[1622] Characteristically enough, however, Przybyszewski added in an aside that he somewhat regretted to destroy the 'interesting legend' of his Satanism, and that he would gladly have joined a 'sect' that would have put Satan, 'the most glorious of God's angels', on the throne of the divinity.[1623] It is hard to establish to what extent he was speaking ironically or rhetorically here and to what extent he was serious.

Much less complex and more clear-cut is the case of Carl William Hansen (1872-1936), alias Ben Kadosh. Hansen was a Danish dairy salesman from humble background who devoted most of his time to esotericism and alchemy. An avid collector of post order charters, he became a member of various international esoteric societies, among them Papus' Martinist Order, as well as an enthusiastic participant of a number of marginal spiritual groups in Denmark. In 1906, he published a twenty-some-page pamphlet entitled *Den ny morgens gry: erdensbygmesterens genkomst* ('The Dawn of a New Morning: The Return of the World's Master Builder'), in which he announced the establishment of a cult of Satan/Lucifer and proposed the formation of a Masonic Luciferian organisation. Interested would-be Luciferians were to enquire at his home at Hjørringgade 29 in Copenhagen.[1624] During the Danish census of the same year, Hansen declared himself a Luciferian by religion, making himself without doubt the first officially registered Satanist in history. A newspaper article from about the same time described how he celebrated Christmas in Luciferian manner, honouring Baphomet rather than the 'white Christ'.[1625]

Den ny morgens gry was written in an extremely muddled and deliberately obscure Danish, which does not really help to determine the exact nature of its author's Luciferian creed. Faxneld nevertheless has attempted a reconstruction. Central tenet of Ben Kadosh's system, as the title of his pamphlet already indicates, was the assertion that the Grand Architect of the Universe venerated in traditional Freemasonry was in reality none other than Lucifer. Judging by the way he defined this Lucifer, Kadosh appears to have been quite familiar with the ideas of Lévi. I quote part of Faxneld's paraphrase:

> The source of all life is, according to Kadosh, Lucifer's father, 'that which language does not have any understandable pronounceable word for'. Lucifer himself is 'the expression of the unpronounceable', i.e. his father, and the Luciferian cult should be viewed as centred on 'the worship and adoration of [an] eternal, hidden, mighty or omnipotent force in nature'. Satan, in other words, is the vehicle of the hidden, unknowable God, and the

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[1620] Przybyszewski, *Totenmesse*, chapter 1: 'weil in ihr der mächtige Pulsstrom des lebendigen Geschlechtes, der fieberheiße Samengolf des Lichtes, des Willens nach persönlicher Unsterblichkeit erzittert.'

[1621] Przybyszewski, *Ferne komm ich her*, 225.

[1622] Przybyszewski, *Ferne komm ich her*, 226: 'was für ein armseliger, langweiligier und prosaischer Satanismus!'

[1623] Przybyszewski, *Ferne komm ich her*, 225-227.

[1624] Per Faxneld, 'The Strange Case of Ben Kadosh: A Luciferian Pamphlet from 1906 and its Current Renaissance, ' *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* 11 (2011) 1:1-22, there 2-3. Faxneld's article is about the only source of information on Kadosh in a non-Scandinavian language available, and I have thus relied almost exclusively on his work here. According to Faxneld, an English translation of Kadosh' pamphlet appeared in the independent Satanist journal *The Fenris Wolf* in 1993 (Fr. GCLO, 'Lucifer-Hiram', 72-97): unfortunately enough, I was unable to consult this periodical.

[1625] Faxneld, 'The Strange Case of Ben Kadosh,' 9.

> appropriate path for man to approach this mystery beyond words. God can only be known through his vessel, Lucifer.[1626]

Reading this, it seems as if Kadosh had taken Lévi's ideas to its logical conclusion. It is not hard to recognize the Kabbalist Ein-Soph in Hansen's 'unpronounceable god', and Lévi's 'magical agent' in his Lucifer – although Lévi, of course, had emphasized that this Luciferian agent should be mastered rather than worshipped. Unsurprisingly, Kadosh also equates Lucifer with Pan, 'the 'Sum' – or Ego – of the material nature, the creating Logon and Force!'[1627] Kadosh claimed that this divinity, which was both impersonal and personal, could be invoked or evoked by proper ritual, and he seems to have performed alchemist experiments to this purpose.[1628]

Both these isolated and exceptional instances of early Satanism are found exactly at the point where we would expect them: Przybyszewski's in the wake of Romantic Satanism and its later nineteenth-century successors; that of Ben Kadosh within the world of occultism, as an outgrowth of Lévian esotericism. In retrospect, it is almost surprising that it took an eccentric Dane operating as late as 1906 to bring the heterodox potential of Lévi's system to full bloom. In both cases, identification played a role of some importance. Although Kadosh distanced himself from traditional images of the Satanist as a foetus-devouring, orgy-celebrating fiend, Faxneld tentatively suggests that he derived his idea for a Masonic organisation worshipping Lucifer directly or indirectly from the publications of Taxil.[1629] This hypothesis seems more than plausible to me. As a further clue, Hansen's esoteric alias of Ben Kadosh might be mentioned; the Scottish degree of Knight Kadosh was, according to Taxil's fabrications, the degree hat initiated the adept to the true and secret core of Masonry as worship of Lucifer. Kadosh will have known about the fictitious character of Taxil's Palladium: this might have been the reason, one may speculate, that he proceeded to form a religious organisation himself. This could mean that with Ben Kadosh, at long last, we have found a genuine example of neo-Palladism of some sort.[1630]

With Przybyszewski, matters are less unequivocal. Like the earlier Romantic Satanists, he adopted Satan as a positive symbol in a general sense, but his attitude towards Satan, as we have noted, was never free from ambiguities (as, for that matter, had been the case with the Romantic Satanists as well). The alleged practices of historic and contemporary Satanists were described by him in lurid and uncomplimentary terms. His self-designation as a Satanist may have been initially inspired by the fact that others had attributed Satanism to him because of the content of his fiction. In his memoirs, he mentions the 'masses for Satan' that were rumoured to be held in the bohemian circles which he frequented, and his definition of his own Satanism is introduced by a long remark about the personal stigma of Satanist that seemed attached to his person since the publication of *Die Synagoge Satan*.[1631]

[1626] Faxneld, 'The Strange Case of Ben Kadosh,' 5.
[1627] Faxneld, 'The Strange Case of Ben Kadosh,' 3.
[1628] Faxneld, 'The Strange Case of Ben Kadosh,' 3, 7.
[1629] Faxneld, 'The Strange Case of Ben Kadosh,' 4.
[1630] Curiously enough, a 'Neo-Luciferian Church' claiming Ben Kadosh as its predecessor was established in Denmark in 2005. This would arguably make it a form of neo-neo-Palladism. In practice, however, the ideas of Alesiter Crowley seems to lay a dominant role in the group's theology or philosophy, although spurious references to Albert Pike can be found in their creedal statements. Membership seems to be restricted to 10-20 people. See Faxneld, 'The Strange Case of Ben Kadosh,' 13-21.
[1631] Concerning rumors of 'bohemian Satanism', see Przybyszewski, *Ferne komm ich her*, 100 ('sie hielten unmenschliche 'schwarze Messen' ab. Es fehlte nicht viel, und man hätte für sicher ausgegeben, daß in diesen Zirkeln armer Bohèmines all das vorging, was Minucius Felix über die ersten Christen erzählt hat!'), 134 ('die lästerlichen 'Satansmessen'[…] welche die nämliche Boheme angeblich feierte'); regarding the rumors about his own Satanism, ibidem, 221-222 ('Dieser Satanismus machte meinen Namen überall berühmt oder brachte ihn vielmehr durch unglaubliche Klatschgeschichten in Verruf. Einmal macht man mich zum Hierophanten einer

Przybyszewski's utterances about his diabolical image were not devoid of reality: a contemporary author even published a novel that featured him as ideological instigator and real-life participant of a sect of Satanists involved in blasphemous and orgiastic rites.[1632] We can recognise the familiar process of attribution and identification at work in miniature here. But the Polish author also strikes one as someone with a keen eye for nineteenth-century countercultural trends. Donning the dark mantle of the Satanist certainly was not without *chic* in the fin de siècle, just as Nietzsche, anarchism, and Darwinism enjoyed a certain vogue. The possibility remains that Przybyszewski's Satanism originated as a rather resilient whim of fashion that was only given a more or less sophisticated philosophical shape by the Polish author many years later because his personality by now had become inseparably linked to his identification as a Satanist. Further research is needed to establish how complete his identification with the cause of Satan really was, and to what measure the fallen angel is systematically evoked in his publications and personal texts.

However this may be, it is clear that these lonely examples of Satanist inclinations do not amount to the significant movement of Satanism that many contemporary and later authors thought to detect in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The Luciferianism of Ben Kadosh seems to have remained a one-man affair: even his wife and two daughters declared themselves Lutherans during the census of 1906.[1633] Przybyszewski exerted a slightly wider influence in Polish, Scandinavian, and German avant garde circles; but after the turn of the century, he seems to have foundered into oblivion. Faxneld does not recount what became of his 'Children of Satan'. The existence of these two exceptional characters thus does not notably affect our general picture of a nineteenth century that was devoid of actual Satanists. It would take at least two more decades before an organised religious Satanism would appear in the Western religious landscape, and many more before this new religious movement really would take root. But that is another story, for another time.

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satanistischen oder palladistischen Sekte, ich stand ja angeblich in engen Beziehung zu Miss Diana Vaughan und Leo Taxil […]'). Cf. also Faxneld, 'Witches, Anarchism, and Evolutionism,' 53-54.

[1632] The novel was Arthur Landsberger's *Wie Hilde Simon mit Gott und der Teufel kämpfte: Der Roman einer Berlinerin* (1910); I owe this information to Gabriela Matuszak, *'Der geniale Pole'? Stanislaw Przybyszewski in Deutschland (1892-1992)*, trans. Dietrich Scholze (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1996), 125-125. In his mémoirs, Przybyszewski identifies this author incorrectly as [Marcus] Landau; Przybyszewski, *Ferne komm ich her*, 222.

[1633] Faxneld, 'The Strange Case of Ben Kadosh,' 9. There is a slight possibility that three or four members of an informal occult circle Hansen co-organised may have shared his ideas (cf. Faxneld, 'The Strange Case of Ben Kadosh,' 11), but even this remains to be proven.

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